

THE OLD TESTAMENT
IN THE LIGHT OF
MODERN RESEARCH

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THE
OLD TESTAMENT
IN THE LIGHT OF
MODERN RESEARCH.

BY THE
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AUTHOR'S NOTE.

An intended preface has grown into an introductory chapter, and leaves little to be added here.

The author, troubled and perplexed, has had a flood of light poured upon the pages of his Old Testament by the Higher Criticism, and his one wish is to help others in their perplexities.

He feels bound therefore to acknowledge that there is little in this work which he can claim as his own, and this must be his apology where he may seem to dogmatize. He merely follows—afar off—in the footsteps of such great masters as Wellhausen, Reuss, Kuenen, Kautsch, Driver, Ryle, Robertson Smith, Davidson, Kirkpatrick, and Budde. These are only a selected few out of a large number of works consulted. He cannot pay all his debts, but he must at least do himself the pleasure of acknowledging his indebtedness to his publisher, whose keen reading of the proofs has led to many corrections and suggestions.

It is not easy to convey a message in a borrowed tongue, and even forty years of silence cannot hush the voice of early childhood: but the author fondly hopes that the reader will not, in consequence of occasional awkward expressions, lose his interest in these pages. Friendly critics have saved the writer from many a Gallicism; not a few, however, remain. Now that he sees his thoughts in print he is appalled at his own temerity; but he would plead that his intention is good although the achievement may be small.

J. R. C.

ERRATA.

Page 5 line 22 for 'Jael's wife,' read 'Jael, Heber's wife.'

„ 123. The note in reference to Giants in the Antediluvian World was taken from D. Wilson's "Prehistoric Man," vol. i. p. 114, who gave the reference to "Philosophical Transactions," vol. xxiv. p. 85, but Daniel Wilson's reference is found to be erroneous.

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INTRODUCTION.

TO write upon the Old Testament may seem to many a comparatively easy task, and there are others who may think that long since the last word has been said on the subject. There was a time when theologians alone were thought competent to study Holy Writ ; there was a time also, and this not long ago, when it was held that the Bible could be intelligibly understood without any aid from outside sources : a patient, earnest study of God's own Word was all that was needed, and all light from 'profane' learning was considered altogether superfluous and almost wrong.

Thought has travelled far since then : the last sixty, or even forty years have brought many and important changes, and the age in which we live abounds in new needs. Our extension of knowledge in every direction, and of the methods of arriving at it, has been immense, and our intellectual horizon has greatly widened. Science has made many discoveries, if it has also manufactured a few theories ; it has proved to us that the universe is far larger and older than we had dreamed : everywhere it has found unbroken order, unchanging law, continuous development. We owe a heavy debt, too, to the new

historical method which has robbed history possibly of much of its artistic, romantic, reflective setting of classical days, but which has made of it something infinitely more exact, more intolerant of loose statement or careless conjecture. In every field of knowledge we see clear tokens of the spirit of the age, a spirit characterized by sincerity and reality, a zeal for truth, a passion for accurate, methodical, painstaking research. The spade of the excavator has unearthed monuments restoring to us the forgotten history of antiquity as far back as four thousand years before the Christian era. The ethnologist no longer regards myths, folk-lore, primitive customs, savage instincts, as so much useless lumber, as so many baneful weeds, but carefully collects, sorts, studies them historically and scientifically as precious 'survivals' of a remote age, the wreckage of ancient beliefs, giving us a key to the mysteries of the past, enabling us to reconstruct prehistoric days.

Greater even than the gain in extension of knowledge is the new temper in which knowledge itself is now approached. A marked change for the better is everywhere visible in the modern zeal for truth. In every department the spirit of the age is characterized by a fearless honesty and sincerity: it is impatient of superficial half-truths, preferring to suspend its judgment where no solid basis of evidence is to be found, to wait patiently till new light comes, rather than indulge in plausible guesses or

generalize without positive data. It is now felt that truthfulness of mind is of vital importance not only to knowledge but to character, that to fear investigation even in matters of faith, to conceal difficulties, to slur over inconsistencies, or to overstate convictions, to become, in short, an advocate instead of a truth-seeker, are faults which darken and degrade the soul.

In every other department the bases of our knowledge have been tested and scientifically overhauled, scientific and historical methods have been severely applied, and have taught the world that guesswork will not do: that truth is not to be won by throttling liberty of thought, by authoritative dogmatizing, nor again by branding all who insist on rational proof as heretics, agnostics or worse. The very foundations of knowledge in its every branch have been laid bare and subjected to a fierce search-light so as to discover the real state of things, to test and examine the knowledge of facts each several department professes to give us so as to see if this profession is borne out and verified by the facts themselves. Naturally, then, when our knowledge in other spheres was so rigorously tested, theology could no longer reasonably be held exempt from the same rigorous course of analysis. Its historical basis must be tried by the same strict standards which were employed elsewhere.

And it was not enough that theologians should overhaul their own fabric and reshape it in accord-

ance with their own preconceived ideas and prejudices. The Bible itself must be put on its trial like any other book: its teachings on science, history, morals, religion must be cast into the crucible, and not till it established its claims, and was ready to court every kind of investigation, could the modern critical mind admit its obligation or its right to be accepted as of binding authority by rational men. Even orthodox Divines admit now the reasonableness of this plea. They neither ask nor wish that criticism should pause or stay its progress even before the shrine of the Christian Faith: they do not protest now as of old and bid investigators leave at least the Bible untouched. They know it is not only vain but unworthy to evade honest criticism, the confession of a weak and faltering faith, an altogether unworthy fear lest Christianity and the Bible should not be strong enough to stand the test of searching Truth.

In 1860, adherents of Darwinism in science, and advocates for the application of critical methods to the Bible were looked upon and denounced by large portions of the community as blasphemers; in 1908 orthodox theologians regard evolution as an established principle, and are no longer alarmed by the critical results which seemed at first sight so destructive. When Queen Victoria came to the throne the year 4004 B.C. was accepted, in all sobriety, as the date of the creation of the world; now we measure the age of the world by hundreds

of millions of years ; and perhaps no statement can better illustrate the change which has come over the spirit of the age than the mention of this simple fact.

But it is not only the intellectual horizon that has widened, the ethical spirit of the age is immeasurably broader than it was a generation ago. Even in religious teaching, which invariably lags behind the spirit of its day, nothing is more marked than the modern change of emphasis from a Christianity of right belief to a Christianity of right character and conduct. Nowadays the moral ideal, in habit of thought if not yet in actual practice, is very high, and S. Paul's words : "Whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, think on these things," appeal to the reason, the conscience, the hearts of men to-day as never before. Men therefore find it hard to think of the Bible as their fathers did when, in its records, deeds are reported and approved in the name of God which their conscience condemns, such as the murder of Sisera in his sleep by his hostess, Jael's wife. In Holy Writ, again, there are views of God's relationship to man, such as His hardening Pharaoh's heart, which seem inexplicable if man is to be regarded, as his consciousness assures him, in the light of a free agent, with the liberty to act as he wills ; especially as it is on this assumption alone that he is responsible for his actions, and that his moral worth depends. Man also asks himself "can God approve injustice,

favoritism, treachery, cruelty, wholesale massacres?" Can such a prayer as the Psalmist's, "Blessed shall he be who taketh thy children and dasheth them against the stones?" or the order given as direct from God to destroy the Amalekites, man, woman, and child, be divinely inspired? Yet these immoral acts, as we should call them, are written large in the pages of the Old Testament. Once more, are human beings mere automatic puppets in God's almighty hands? our moral sense rebels against the bare suggestion, yet Moses represents God as saying to Pharaoh: "In very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee My power." Such questions are being commonly asked: the moral spirit of the age is repelled by such low moral views of God, and these ethical questionings cannot be answered without challenging the common traditional views of the Bible hitherto held.

On these grounds,—by reason of the immense extension of our knowledge and the vast deepening of our moral sense,—it has long been felt that there must be a reconsideration of many of our current conceptions regarding the Bible and religion, for they failed to meet or satisfy the new moral and intellectual needs of the day: they were out of touch with those higher aspirations which lay hidden and unspoken, but actively alive, in many minds and hearts. True, many well-meaning but short-sighted religious souls have ever protested, with the very best of intentions, against any reforms, as

tampering with the faith of our fathers; and to these the challenging of the old creeds was but one of the many signs of the time; like the decay of church-going, the decrease of Bible-reading, the non-observance of Sunday, this new demand only proved that personal religion was at a low ebb, whereas in effect it proved just the reverse. God's light had grown so much clearer, man's moral and spiritual ideas and needs had so gained in height and depth and breadth that the old watchwords and formulas had lost their hold on people's minds and hearts; their quickening influence, their inspiring motive power had evaporated. New moral and mental elements and forces, adapted to their present requirements, must filter into the antiquated theology of our fathers, or men now thoroughly in earnest would have none of it.

It would be hard to imagine a change more far-reaching than that which has come over religion during the last fifty years. "In 1850 theology was the repetition of the formulas of the 4th and 16th centuries: every word of the Bible was divinely inspired and equally infallible: human reason was voted out of place in the sphere of religion, which consisted mainly in emotional preaching or ritual observances: art, science, politics, and social life were worldly things full of deadly snares" (Mayor). Here again thought has travelled far since then; our ideas on evolution, inspiration, toleration, the religious character of art, science, social duties,

amusements, have wondrously changed ; one thing after another long denounced as absolutely contrary to the Christian faith has in course of time come to be a household word to us, and yet the faith is none the worse, but greatly the gainer by it. When old doctrines vanish rapidly like this, as has happened in the last sixty years, and new truths, or rather restatements of the truth, no longer seem strange : when views once regarded as dangerous are universally accepted, even though at first it required a little straining of the conscience to make room for them, it clearly proves that these old doctrines were not adapted to the true needs of the time, and had already decayed at the roots. But in religion, above all else, reforms come slowly, for it is essentially conservative. The advocates and upholders of the older creed cling to it till the very ground is cut away from under their feet ; it has stood them in good stead and they love the old religion, and loyally exalt it into a fetish ; they abhor those who clamour for reform, and their new fads, as dangerous enemies to the Faith, and resist the introduction of the new elements as long as they can. But they are unable to shut out the new ideas and needs ; they are obliged to let them in, were it only for self-preservation, otherwise they themselves will lag behind and lose their hold on men's hearts and minds. A few of their number, the advanced thinkers of their generation, " scribes instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, bringing forth out of their

treasures things new and old " lead the way, and, as true representatives of the better insight and feeling of their time, voice the new needs of men's inmost hearts. Gradually, under pressure, the rank and file of the old school grudgingly fall into line, and once more men breathe freely in the new bracing religious atmosphere, only to find in time that the position must again be shifted, and that there is more change yet beyond, for religion is an organism, and as such must ever be growing. For it to stand still is death.

But, it may naturally be asked, "If we have constantly to reconsider and remodel our views and theology in this way; if the religious ideas of sixty, nay, thirty years ago are now obsolete; if old landmarks are thus rudely removed; if everything is thus changing, and likely to go on changing, what then remains sure and certain? Is there anything left in our Faith that cannot be shaken?"

Yes, Truth and Faith can be trusted to hold their own: they cannot fail: it is only our partial views of these that can be shaken. What is Truth? What is Faith? Truth is perfect harmony between things as they are and our views of them, or in technical language "Truth is the perfect correspondence between thoughts and things:" Faith is the actual relationship between the soul of man and his God. Now God's attitude or relationship towards man is ever one and the same, it never changes or can change: it is only our human view or knowledge

of this eternal relationship that can alter, and it can and must grow and deepen as we grow. In the infancy of mankind God was pictured as a strong vindictive Being: a further step was taken in our knowledge of Him when He was seen to be not vindictive but righteous: the greatest advance of all was when we learnt to know Him as our loving righteous Father. But God was as much man's loving righteous Father when we were savages as He is now that we are civilized Christians, only we realized it not. So by Faith is meant the true expression of the relationship between the soul of man and his God: by Theology, or religious creeds, the attempt to frame this eternal Truth, this Faith in the human words and ideas of the day.

We can thus see how true it is that Faith never changes; it is Theology that is ever changing, and must change if we are to grow in faith. Faith is the perfect living portrait, Theology is ever man's poor caricature of God, and the more our conceptions of God take clearer outline, the more God unveils or reveals Himself to our minds and hearts, the nearer we approach to the Truth and our picture of Him resembles God as He really is.

To take a concrete instance: the religion of Moses was good and excellently adapted to satisfy the requirements of the Jews of his day; but it necessarily reflected the narrow limited atmosphere of his generation, and could not possibly meet the needs of an Isaiah, for example; so, later on, it

was replaced by the higher and more spiritual religion of the prophets, who taught that to obey is better than sacrifice, and that a lowly and contrite heart is the sacrifice truly acceptable unto God. Even this highly spiritual religion of the prophets did not quite meet the requirements of Christ's day, so it, too, in its turn had to be superseded by Christianity. Yet our Lord's Gospel was not a cancelling of all that went before it. Christ took up and assimilated all the better and still living elements of the old creeds: "I am come not to destroy but to fulfil the Law and the Prophets:" and our theologies ever since have been man's attempts to frame in the words and ideas of the day the perfect portrait of God our Father which Christ has given us in His teaching and in His own Person. We are very far from a true realization of it even now, but we are nearer to it than any who have gone before us.

So it is that, to use Dr. Salmond's happy phrase, "Theology is the marriage of a mortal with an immortal, the union of the philosophy of the day with Faith: the Faith lives for ever, the philosophy grows old and dies; when the philosophic element of a religion becomes antiquated, its explanations which satisfied one age become unsatisfactory to the next," and must go overboard. It is simply one more illustration of the great law of evolution. Progress means growth, development: an acorn fulfils its mission not by remaining an acorn but

by becoming an oak: a child fulfils his not by remaining a child but by growing into a man. Progress means the putting aside of the old bottles for new; if the new wine were poured into the old wine-skins, the fermenting spirit would operate so powerfully as to burst the bottles and spill the wine. Hence, "new wine must be put into new bottles *that both may be preserved.*" At the birth of the Messiah the dispensation of Moses had done its work in the education of the world; it had served as a "pedagogue" to lead men by the hand to the school of Christ; its types and ceremonies had waxed old, and were now obsolete by age and use and the accomplishment of their purpose. The requirements of the age had outgrown them. The bottles of Judaism would not hold the wine of Christianity. The new wine of baptism could not be poured into the old bottle of circumcision, or the new wine of the Eucharist into the old bottle of the blood-stained altar, or the new ministry of mercy into the old ministry of sacrifice, or the new gladness of the Gospel into the old discipline of the Baptist, or the new wine of holiness into the old bottles of a fleshly heart. Not only would the dregs of the old fermentation have acted injuriously upon the new wine, souring it, but the new spirit would have worked too powerfully in the old bottles, bursting them. So Christ came "not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil them;" not by mending and repairing what was worn out in Judaism,

but by resetting the eternal Truth in a perfectly new frame. He did not destroy the old: true, He swept away with a ruthless hand the mushroom-growths, the excrescences that had gathered around it in course of ages, but He also retained the better and still living elements of the old creed, all that gave Judaism its value, the great underlying principles that formed its soul; He corrected its partial statements of the Truth, reasserted all that was worth preserving, added much more of His own creation so as to bring it perfectly into line with the highest and deepest moral and intellectual needs and convictions of the world.

In a word Christ transfigured Judaism: it was still the same eternal Faith, only wondrously developed and transformed: in it we have at last the perfect portrait and revelation of God Himself as He is, but so robed in the pure dazzling light of Divine thought that our blear dull eyes are not able to bear its splendour as of the Sun at noon-day, or gaze stedfastly upon God's Face, revealed there, as we might were our eyes not holden. All of us, ever since, from Apostles downward, have looked with dim eyes upon this perfect living portrait, and one after another feebly tried to express in words our imperfect and blurred vision of the perfect portrait.—It is at best only a caricature. But as our eyes are growing day by day more used to the light, our vision of God is gradually taking clearer outline, gaining in health and colour.

So it is that "the Faith never changes, Theology is ever changing," the false in our picture is rubbed out and fades away, the true is daily more pronounced, and with each new revelation there must be a change of form, something taken out here, something added there.

Most of us so love the old picture to which we have been so long accustomed that we resent any interference with it. Even when the new wine within ourselves is ready to burst its old bottle, we prefer the old and protest against the voice of warning telling us that it is high time to pour the new wine into new bottles that both may be preserved. In a way the new preacher's voice finds a ready echo in our own hearts. Even while firmly believing ourselves to be clinging to the old beliefs, the old watchwords of our fathers, under various disguises we are neutralizing our profession of the old creed by all manner of tacit reservations, attempts to justify it to ourselves though we feel that it is already sapped and decaying at the roots. There is in us a lurking sense of shame, a sneaking suspicion that it is disloyal to desert the creed of our fathers. A little later, when our eyes are fully opened, and we have taken the inevitable step forward, the new belief seems so clear and simple that it surprises us we did not see it before. Which of us of the older generation does not understand and sympathize with the remark of a recent writer: "Now that I have left behind me the Calvinistic

dogmatism in which I was born and bred, I feel like a man suddenly awaking from a nightmare and hideous dream." Most people would be amazed to find how much their belief depends upon their environment, and, exaggerated as it may sound, there is truth in the saying, "religion is very much a matter of geography." Of this we may be sure, that no resistance to the investigation of truth is so headstrong as that offered by mere prejudice and custom.

"Truth can never fail: it is only our partial view of the truth that can be shaken." If we would but bear this in mind we should not be angry with those heralds of the Truth who are honestly and reverently seeking after it, nor so indifferent to the answers they give us after many years of patient toil.

We can form little idea of the immense patience and labour, the lives of self-denying study and research, that these seekers after truth have had to face in their rigorous analysis of the Bible before any positive, verified, tangible results could be obtained. Every branch of modern knowledge, physical science, archæology, a comparative study of religions, textual criticism, ethnology, ancient history, primitive culture, had in turn to be thoroughly mastered before the expert student was in a position to decide upon actual facts. "Reality and sincerity" was the critic's motto, and, as may well be imagined, his work has been jealously and search-

ingly scrutinized by friend and foe alike: and both have had to own that the methods adopted are true, exact, and scientific, while the results achieved are uniformly marked by soberness of judgment and scholarly completeness. It would be impossible to praise too highly the conscientiousness with which the minutest details have been carefully scanned, the honest suspension of judgment where there was any doubt, the candid acknowledgment wherever a surmise was hazarded, the loving enthusiasm of the student who believes that those only are enemies of the Bible who fail to investigate it, or who shrink from investigating it completely.

We may therefore safely accept as established facts the conclusions at which these experts have arrived. And what are these conclusions, and what the outcome of them?

At the outset it seemed to us almost as though all we had been taught to look upon as sacred revelation were to be reduced to a chaos of literary fragments, for, indeed, the Hexateuch, the Psalter, and many of the historical books, together with the books of the Prophets, had apparently been torn into shreds. But we soon find that the critic's work is not merely negative and destructive. Critical experts have gathered up the scattered fragments, and reconstructed them into a connected and far more intelligible whole, so that as a matter of fact we now possess a clear, scientific, intelligent understanding of our Bible, where before all was hap-

hazard and without method. The Divine character of the message in the Bible has been rendered far more intelligible. We may have had to reconsider our traditional views as to the Bible's scientific and historic teaching, to recognize the distinctive human element in its composition, an element which goes far to explain the imperfect faith and morality, the many bewildering inconsistencies which we find in some of its early pages,—imperfections which our conscience had long since condemned, although perhaps we had not the courage nor the larger faith to admit this even to ourselves. True, but the application of critical methods to our reading of the Bible has vastly strengthened our Faith,—a faith that behind the veil of this visible world there lives a personal living God of infinite love, wisdom, power, and purpose, Who is guiding the world and man, and Whose Hand can be clearly seen in revelation and history.

Our eyes have at last been opened to see in the Bible's pages God's moral government of the world in a uniformly consistent and systematic way right on from the very beginning. We see now that Creation is a gradual never-ending process, stretching indefinitely behind us and before, always increasing, changing, advancing. So also is knowledge, so also is God's revelation of Himself to man, so also is religion, so also is life. Of none of these dare we say that we see the beginning, neither can we discern the end. One and all they spring from one root,

and all our conceptions of a multiplicity of creations, of a series of abrupt beginnings and equally abrupt endings, have to be banished from our minds.

Faith no longer compels us to believe that the forms in which Genesis writers expressed their ideas of the Creation are sacred and unalterable: that the primitive notions of a primitive age, an age of comparative ignorance, must be binding now on us dwellers upon earth in more enlightened days. Faith does not insist that our salvation in this life and the next depends on our accepting as eternal truths the literal facts of the biographies of the patriarchs, nor on our adopting their conceptions of God for our own. We have now a far higher understanding of the Bible and its message. Its value for us does not rest on its science, its history, or its dates, or the exact order of its books, nor on its verbal inspiration: but we know that on its spiritual side, which alone matters, it is tenfold more than ever before God's own Book, showing us the steps by which God has unveiled Himself to man little by little as our eyes were able to bear the light: until at last He revealed Himself as He is in Christ Jesus.

Here again criticism has proved to us the truth of what we have tried to express in this chapter. In the Bible, as in all theology, there is an element which is ever dying, and there is one which never dies: one mortal factor there is in Holy Scripture that changes as the world and experience change,

and one again that is immortal and changeless: portions whose value is merely temporary and transient, other portions which are for all times and for all people and for all eternity. It is this last and spiritual element which alone matters. Now as of old the simple unlettered peasant can make of the Bible a lamp unto his feet, and a light unto his path in all the changes and chances of this mortal life, with its joys and sorrows, its hopes and fears, its graces and its sins. Criticism does emphatically *not* rob him of this deep and abiding comfort and help, for the spiritual message of the Bible remains untouched. All that criticism has done is to clear the ground and our minds as well of much misconception on matters of science, history, dates, and so forth, but these have an incidental connection only with spiritual revelation. It leaves the relationship between the soul and its God ever the same, a thing which cannot be shaken. So long as this remains it cannot, does not, greatly matter that we have to re-sort, set in order our ideas of the exactitude of this story or that, to admit this book or that as belonging to a later or an earlier date, to realize that the writers who edited the Bible made use of material varying considerably in historical worth.

If, for example, the Psalter can no longer be regarded as the record of the spiritual experience of one individual, David, it becomes even more precious as voicing and embodying all the highest aspirations, the purest joys, the noblest sorrows of

many centuries of national life. In like manner if the laws given in the Hexateuch were not indeed, as was once fancied, the product of a few months or years of Moses' life, they surely gain in interest and instructiveness when known to be the slow growth of many generations in the most interesting crises of Israel's spiritual life.

No, the Higher Critics have not, as once we feared, robbed us of our Bible. They took it away, yes, for a season, and we feared it had fallen into sacrilegious hands, but all the while they were honestly and reverently studying its pages by the light of a vast accumulated knowledge, and in a patient thoroughgoing manner. As seekers after Truth, and with eyes fixed upon their ultimate goal, looking neither to the right hand nor to the left, lured by no will-o'-the-wisp of sentiment, tradition, or authority, discouraged by no hostile voices, they set themselves to reach after Truth, if haply they might find her. Patiently, painfully, self-denyingly they pursued their way, and now it is we who reap the reward of their long years of struggle and of labour. They have given us back a Bible far more intelligible, far more helpful, far more spiritual than ever it was before: they have illuminated its pages with a flood of precious light. By that light we shall read into it a deeper meaning, a clearer, stronger, more perfect faith, and now, as never before, we "are always ready to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason for the hope that is in us."

CHAPTER I.

THE GROWTH OF RELIGIONS.

THE Old Testament has an interesting story to tell us of Israel's quest after the knowledge of the one true God, and also of many of the stages through which the Hebrews had to pass on the road to the goal: and as the story unfolds we see a steady progress onwards from small beginnings to a result of incalculable value to humanity,—a highly spiritual faith. Politically the place of Israel in history may be very small, but its influence on the history and civilization of the world has been enormous, for the Bible, which has revolutionized the world, was moulded in Hebrew minds, coloured by the genius of Hebrew speech, and its truths were put to the proof for the education of the world in Hebrew hearts and lives. The three religions which have taught men to worship one God, the Jewish, the Christian, and the Mahometan, are all due to Hebrew religious thought.

Judged by its perfected result, its high-water mark, as seen in an Isaiah, for example, Israel's religion is an essentially enlightened, spiritual, inspiring faith—a faith in a living, loving Personal God, sole Creator of the universe; above all, a faith in a moral

Governor of the world, "holy in all His ways, and righteous in all His works," all along guiding mankind to a final goal worthy of His character,—a faith which finds its consummation and crown in Christianity, for our Lord Himself tells us that He came to put the coping-stone to it: "I am come not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil them."

But we know that the Hebrew religion is a gradual growth and did not spring, like Minerva, into full-grown existence, ready-made, from the mind of God. This is not God's way of dealing with man: and the purpose of this book is to show Israel's religion "in the making." It is true that the opening chapters of Genesis represent Adam and the early patriarchs as already possessing a clear knowledge of the one true God, but this was not really the case: it is a common misconception, an illusion due to an unintelligent, uncritical, superficial reading of the Bible. The actual religion of those early days did not bear the faintest resemblance to the highly spiritual picture of it given us by Genesis writers, and the Bible itself furnishes us the clue for a right understanding of the matter.

But we shall not really understand the evolution of Israel's religion at all until we have cleared and paved the way by examining certain points which may not seem to bear upon our subject at all, and yet are inseparable from it.

To begin with, we cannot study the religion of

Israel, or any other creed, be it Christianity, Mahometanism, or Buddhism, by itself. We are obliged to study them thus separately in ordinary practice for convenience, but it is an artificial distinction. Nature recognizes no such distinctions of nations, languages, and peoples, but only *mankind* universally, individual man in the mass ; and precisely because human nature is at bottom one and the same always and everywhere, so we shall see that all religions the wide world over have a striking family likeness ; so much so that missionaries, struck by the wondrous similiarity of many of the beliefs of their heathen flock to what is to be found in Holy Scripture, have fancied that somehow the Bible stories must have already reached them in some mysterious way. In the presence of the unknown, man's curiosity has everywhere prompted him to ask such natural questions as "How did the world come into being, and man, and disease, and death?" Almost invariably the simple rough answers to these questions have been strangely alike, as we shall see in our next chapter. These myths form the roots, the common foundation of all religions ; this is the human element which they all have in common, and we shall see that it is a hardy plant, and survives even in Christianity, while Judaism is full of it.

In our study of Israel's religion we cannot afford to disregard this human element,—it is so pronounced. We shall see that it is thus and thus alone that we can account for such extraordinary

Hebrew conceptions as the following, and the list might be indefinitely lengthened :—

The scene in the garden of Eden where Satan assumes the form of a serpent, as well as the worship of Jehovah in the shape of a bull, are palpably survivals of a day when primitive man commonly believed that gods and spirits could transform themselves into any animal they chose. To the same primitive myths we owe the presence of trees of life and knowledge; the formation of man from clay, and of woman from man's rib; the conversion of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt; the phenomenal ages and gigantic size of mankind in the days before the Flood. We shall see that the account, as given in Genesis, of the introduction of disease and death, the creation of the world, and the Flood story find their parallels among uncivilized races in every latitude. Again, can we possibly assign a divine source to the procedure adopted by the Hebrews for the removal of uncleanness arising from contact with a dead body (Numb. xix. 1—11) by means of the ashes of a red heifer which has to be brought to the priest, burnt, the ashes collected, then mixed with water, and everything done with a ceremonial that baffles description, and reminds one strongly of the formulas of the "medicine-man?" This is clearly a survival of the "taboo" arising from contact with a dead body and the procedure for its removal so commonly found even now among savages, and which was once universal.

Another waif and stray of olden days is the strange ordeal of the "water of bitterness or jealousy" (Numb. v.) which the priest is to give to a woman supposed to be unfaithful, and which would not harm her if innocent, but, if guilty, "would cause her body to swell and her thigh to fall away." Sprung from a very primitive belief, too, is undoubtedly the rite of placing the people's sins on a goat and sending it into the wilderness to Azazel (Lev. xvi.), an evil spirit who was supposed to have his abode there; and the popular belief in witchcraft, exorcism, necromancy, magic amulets, casting lots, oracles, and so forth, can have arisen from no other source. What other explanation can we find, again, for the universal Hebrew belief that the dead were relegated to an underground pit (Sheol) where they led an empty, joyless, hopeless existence, good and bad all huddled together; just the picture of life after death we find in Greek and Roman myth, only worse? The stories of the translation of men to heaven without seeing death, the universal belief in a golden age of original innocence, the prevalence of stone and tree-worship, and of human sacrifices, the vow of Jephthah, and many more similar strange ideas and customs can only be satisfactorily accounted for in the same way. These instances must suffice, especially as our very next chapter deals with this subject at some length, and we have only referred to these cases to make our point more clear.

From what we have already said it naturally fol-

lows as a corollary that, strictly speaking, we cannot speak of religions as one true, and all others false. One and all they have sprung from a common root ; each one in its way is "seeking after God, if haply it may find Him," but some have remained stationary, some have even retrograded, while others have made immense strides forward, and one has reached its goal. The differences between religions are very wide, but they are now admitted to be, like the differences between civilized men and savages, differences only in degree and not in kind.

In our Introduction we stated that the modern intellectual horizon has everywhere widened, but nowhere has it so broadened as in its attitude to religion generally. Sixty, or even thirty, years ago all so-called religions outside the Bible were regarded as worthless superstitions : now the time has passed away when it is possible for the Bible student either to ignore every other religion but that of the Hebrews, or to regard them merely as so many forms of error. The extension of knowledge has clearly taught him that Christianity is but one of many beliefs which have prevailed over vast areas and during indefinite periods, and the historical student of religion feels that he can no longer treat them as so many inventions of the devil, even though he may be firmly persuaded that Christianity stands on a far higher plane than all the rest. Everywhere else we see clear evidences of one continuous process of development from the most slender beginnings,

the most elementary germs, up to life's present marvellously complex conditions: and these universal laws of evolution must hold good in matters of religion just as in nature and civilization. Even as man himself has to take his place among other animals from which he has sprung, and whom he has outdistanced in the race, in the struggle for existence, by reason of certain superior qualities which he possessed and they lacked, so also religion has to be studied as an evolution of which Christianity is the perfect outcome and type amongst a host of imperfect types from which it in its turn has sprung. We cannot, therefore, say of creeds that one is true and all the others false: all alike have their roots in the primitive myths which are mankind's common heritage, man's early simple answers to the universal problems of the origin of the world, man, and death. Starting with these fundamental ideas as their common basis some "have built on this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, others mere wood, hay, stubble;" some have remained all but stationary, others are still in a very low stage of development, while others have all but reached the goal.

The more thoroughly and intelligently religion is studied, the clearer the conviction will be forced upon us that all religions of the world, be they crude and barbaric, be they spiritual and enlightened, are fundamentally one and the same. As Dr. Fairbairn well puts it: "The Son of God

holds in His pierced hands the keys of all the religions, explains all the factors of their being, and all the persons through whom they have been realized." One and all these primitive creeds were but "the baby figures of the giant mass of things to come," and the end crowns all and explains all.

This is not a discovery of to-day: S. Paul knew this truth, so did Malachi long before him. Not only does this Hebrew prophet say that God's Name is magnified among the heathen, but he distinctly speaks of their offerings as having Jehovah for their object: "For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same My name is great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense is offered unto My name, and a pure offering: for My name is great among the Gentiles" (Mal. i. 11 R.V.). S. Paul also recognized the element of truth in heathen creeds, for in his address to the Athenians he says: "As I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, *To the Unknown God*. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you" (Acts xvii. 23 sqq.). Malachi and S. Paul grasped the truth which we are only just beginning to seize,—that during the ages of heathen darkness God "left not Himself without a witness" (cf. Acts x. 34, 35), but made even then certain revelations of Himself to men "in every nation" by the only means which they were then capable of understanding. To a Malachi and a S. Paul these so-called heathen superstitions, good,

bad, or indifferent, were so many blurred and caricatured representations of the truth, witnesses every one of them for God, however faulty and unworthy.

In modern times Cardinal Newman, amongst others, has said precisely the same thing: "There is something truly and divinely revealed in every religion all over the earth," and again: "Revelation, properly speaking, is an universal not a local gift."

"What!" men exclaim, "is Christianity at the root one and the same with cannibalism!" Yes, step by step we can trace the growth of the idea of God from the tiny germ of immature childish superstitions to the full mature blossom of Christianity as Christ conceived it and we do not. At first sight the brutal rites of savages seem as far asunder as the poles from Christianity—those devil-born, this God-like: those black as the nethermost darkness of hell, this bright as heaven's noon-day sun: yet it is after all a difference of degree only.

It was but a toddling step towards a higher Being which made the savage offer his demon-god human sacrifices so as to propitiate the thing he dreaded, his deity: it was another step when presently man, a savage still, but slightly more civilized, worshipped his "lords many and gods many," deities who were even such as men themselves, as vindictive, as cruel, as sensuous as they, but now human. A further advance was made when man's consciousness awoke to the sense that a nation's gods should be moral, of a character to inspire their worshippers

with a love of all that is noble and true and good and pure, and thus we get spiritual religions, like Judaism, with their root-idea of a righteous God : the goal, however, was only reached when Christ proved in Himself that God is in man and man in God, a truth which even now, two thousand years later, we are yet but blindly feeling after.

So it is that every advance in religion dovetails into the faith that went before it, has its roots deeply imbedded in its predecessor, and cannot be maintained without taking up and assimilating the still living elements of the older creed : "I am come not to destroy but to fulfil." "These little systems which had their day and ceased to be" were one and all the imperfect but genuine efforts of their time and generation to comprehend the "Father of all, in every age, in every clime adored" —links in the chain of the evolution of man's faith.

It is only one more illustration of the great law of evolution which we see in operation everywhere and wondrously. In the commonest things it fulfils its daily miraculous task, converting the seed into the flower, the egg into the bird, the caterpillar into the moth, the child into the man.

The egg sleeps in its nest, as motionless as a stone : how can it ever be so transformed as to run and fly? Look at the creeping caterpillar crawling tortuously along the earth, does it seem a likely creature to mount one day on wings and bathe in the sunbeam? Or do those puny perish-

able acorns on which the swine feed seem to hold in themselves the promise of mighty forest-oaks living over a thousand years?

How is it all done? One and all they have a divine something within them, a soul, a vital spark, a germ-cell, a dynamic force, call it what you will, which has an innate capacity of infinite development, and under favourable circumstances will and must burst through its confining barriers, and will not rest till it has perfectly achieved the God-purposed end for which it was created. Everywhere it is a law of development through a series of transformations. In technical language: "When the external conditions become favorable the seed germinates, the materials of active life within it undergo chemical changes of such a nature as to convert them into substances which can readily travel to the seed of growth, and can be used as plastic material by the growing cells, and therefore as the embryo grows the original seed grows less, for its life-giving elements are being used up by the new offspring." The caterpillar must thus pass through its chrysalis stage before it can mount on the wings of the moth: yet through it all the "personality," be it in seed, egg, or child, is ever the same in the perfect flower, bird, and man, only wondrously grown and developed—

"We all are changed by still degrees,
All but the basis of the soul."—

In a sense, all organisms are ever "rising on

stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things."

So it is with religion, for it also is a living organism, and its seed is that feeling—call it instinct, aspiration, curiosity, as you will—which is in the mind and heart of every man born into the world in the presence of the unknown around him. This seed germinates first into nature-worship, then into polytheism, followed by a belief in a moral God, till we get the perfect flower in Christianity.

"But," it may naturally be asked, "why then do not all religions arrive at the goal? Why did other national seekers after God stop half-way while Judaism alone developed the seed into the perfect bloom?"

To this big question two answers may be given; one a purely natural answer, the other the clue to the problem given us in the Bible. Man's solution goes a long way towards a helpful answer, but it does not explain everything. We have already seen that under the law of evolution the seed germinates and develops into the flower only *when all the conditions are favorable*. Many acorns remain acorns and die because their surroundings are not of a nature to quicken the germ-cell into life, and unused functions die. More than this, even when the surrounding conditions are favorable to the maintenance of life they are often so very different in other respects that they abnormally develope some of the original life-cells and stunt

others which cannot live in that environment. Thus do we account for the various species and kinds of vegetable and animal products, and understand why some living beings are fishes, or birds, or beasts, and others men.

The same law holds good in the development of human character. The environment of the Greeks abnormally developed their power of thought and their sense of beauty, so it has been their mission and function to refine and humanize mankind. Art, letters, philosophy, taste have been their contribution to the education of the world.

Similarly, by reason of its environment, Rome's function and mission was to teach mankind law, organization, government. The Teutonic nations' share in mankind's development has been the teaching of honour, truthfulness, respect for women.

In like manner, because of the special environment which was Israel's in the course of its national life, the spiritual or religious element has been pronouncedly developed in the Hebrews, and their mission has been to give the world its true religion.

But, all said and done, mere naturalism does not account for it all. The only answer which satisfactorily explains all the facts must ever be that Israel developed in a unique religious direction of its own "under the constraint of a Divine training, and under the guiding light of a Divine revelation, and that its Prophets,—Moses, Isaiah, Christ,—

rightly claimed to be the spokesmen and representatives of the one true God" (Kirkpatrick).

If it be urged that this would imply an act of favoritism on God's part, unworthy of His character, our answer is that it is precisely because God is full of love and mercy that He thus chose Israel. He set apart the Jews as His chosen people, not out of partiality, but as the instrument in His hands for the purpose He has had in view all along from the beginning of the world,—the salvation of all men: "The fixed purpose that all men shall be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." God does not thus distribute His grace and gifts with a partial or niggard hand. He first selects the Jews to keep the conception of a living righteous Father alive in the midst of an evil world, so that through them He may reach and gather in the Gentiles. For their backsliding God has later on to reject the Jews, but through the Gentiles He means to save the Jews in their turn (Rom. xi.). But we shall speak of this more fully in our chapter on Inspiration.

If therefore we would understand Israel's religion we must not study it by itself, for we cannot ignore other religions that preceded it and contributed largely to its making. We must go behind its earliest historical facts, look out for and expect to find in it many survivals of earlier faiths. The Hebrews are men of the Semitic group of the large family of mankind. As men they will retain a large

portion of the human element which forms the skeleton scaffolding of all religion. As Semites they must and do show forth in their religious rites and doctrine a striking family likeness with other Semitic races, the Arabs and especially the Babylonians, whose direct descendants they are. As Hebrews they have impressed upon this material a distinct stamp of their own in consequence of their special surroundings and the unique line of development which they followed under God's direct training and guidance. It is only by clearly keeping in view the connecting links between the human, the Semitic and the Hebrew elements, by showing how decidedly Israel's religion is rooted in the past, how it has been fostered by its predecessors, has assimilated what was still living in them, that we shall understand it as we should. In our next chapter, on primitive religion, we shall discuss the contribution made by the first of these factors, the human element, and endeavour to point out what an important part it has played in the religion of the Hebrews.

CHAPTER II.

Primitive Man's Religion.

WE stated in our last chapter that all religions are at bottom one and the same. They one and all have their roots in the primitive myths which are mankind's common heritage, man's earliest answers to the world-wide problems: "How did the world, and man, and death come into being?" Let us take the Bible's own answers to these questions by way of illustration.

Gen. ii. 7 tells us that God formed man (his human body) from clods (not "dust") of the field, and then breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, so that man became a living being.

In the story of the Fall (Gen. ii. 15—17; iii. 1—19) we read that death came into the world through man's eating of the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The Creation story says that when God created the world "the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep (waters: the watery abyss: Tehôm), and the breath of God was brooding over the waters." In other words, before the Creation all that existed was (1) darkness, (2) a vast watery abyss, (3) God's breath over it, or air.

Now these passages—and we might quote many

more—give a striking example of a most interesting phenomenon. The Bible explanations of the Creation, the origin of man and death, are legends to be found amongst all primitive peoples all over the world, expressed also in almost identically the same terms, even when the homes of the races are as far apart as Greece, Mexico, Australia, Egypt, South America, Iceland, and the South Sea Islands.

Almost everywhere man is stated to have been formed by some supernatural being out of clay. In New Zealand the legend runs: "The god took red clay and kneaded it with his own blood." Greek myths relate that "men were baked in clay," and the Melanesian story is that "man was made of red clay." Some primitive peoples, however, such as the Australians and South Americans, as well as sundry Greek legends, speak of man as sprung from the lower animals.

That death followed man's disobedience of some god's direct command is also a common primitive belief. With savage races there is a conviction that man was originally immortal, but he forfeited that immortality through breaking some law—some *taboo*—imposed by a deity, and death followed in consequence. In Australia a woman had been forbidden to approach a certain tree in which dwelt a bat: she went near it: the bat fluttered out and thereafter men died. The Ningphoos were banished from paradise and became mortal, for the reason that one of them bathed in forbidden (*tabooed*) waters.

In like manner the Greek myth tells us that mankind was free from death-dealing disease till the woman Pandora lifted the lid of a forbidden box.

The world, in primitive legend, or rather the earth is as a rule supposed to have grown out of something already existing, an animal, an egg, a fragment of soil fished up from the waters, or out of water itself. The Accadians and Japanese supposed the earth to have somehow grown out of water. The South Americans believed it was formed from earth thrown up from the bottom of the water. Most primitive nations incline to the idea of an egg or an animal as the source of all things ; or they even believe that a man was torn to pieces, and out of the fragments were made heaven and earth. Strange as it may sound, the Genesis account, as we show in the analysis of the Bible story in Chapter VI., repeats primitive man's creed of a world sprung from water as the primal element, and also embodies the idea of a heaven and earth formed from the mangled portions of an animal torn to pieces.

These universal "common-stock" myths might be indefinitely multiplied, for ethnologists are carefully collecting and sorting them from every quarter of the globe. Studying them, the question forces itself upon us: How is this universal prevalence of the same ideas to be accounted for? The favorite way of approaching this problem till quite recently has been to trace all these legendary traditions back to a common source—the Bible ; but this

orthodox method of harmonizing these world-wide myths has now been exploded, and a far more natural and rational explanation is now accepted. They are one and all a "survival" of a condition of thought or mind which was once common, if not actually universal, but is now only to be found among savages, and to a certain extent among children.

Confronted by these primitive child-like legends and folk-lore stories scattered over the whole face of the earth, and bearing such a pronounced family likeness, Prof. Max Müller many years ago asked: "Was there a period of temporary madness through which the early mind had to pass, and was it a madness identically the same in India, Babylon, Iceland, America, and the South Sea Islands?" To this we may answer that the human mind in its infancy must needs pass through this most curious, child-like, or savage state of thought.

Curiosity and credulity seem to be the universal characteristics of the human mind in every stage *even* of its development. We all want answers to the questions:—How came this or that to be what it is? What is the origin of the world, and of man, and of death? The only difference between our questioning and that of primitive man is that in these latter days we aim at being accurate and scientific in our search, whereas the savage is easily satisfied with any explanation that seems to square with the scanty facts at his disposal. Prof. Max

Müller has well said, "Primitive man not only did not think as we think, but did not think as we think he ought to have thought." We must, therefore, throw back our thoughts into this primitive age. From our knowledge of modern savage races, and by an intellectual *tour de force* we must face man's surroundings as savages face them.

To primitive man all nature is alive and personified. Every brook and well and tree: every rock and glade: heaven and earth: sun and moon: wind and thunder, are not *things* at all. Each is a living personality, and so the whole universe is peopled with an innumerable host of living spirits, good or bad. In poetry, by an effort of imagination, we personify sun and wind; but even in our own days "A Bushman once saw the personal Wind at Haarfontein, and meant to throw a stone at it, but it ran into a hill^a." In the Iliad Homer recounts how the Wind, by certain mares, became the sire of special steeds. Missionaries, even now, often tell us that they cannot understand how savages can possibly believe that sun and moon are human beings. More than this, to uncivilized races, Sky, Sun, Sea, Wind are not only persons but savage persons. They judge everything by their own standard, and believe each of these Beings to be even such an one as themselves. To the savage the only natural answer to the question: "Why do

^a *South African Folk-lore Journal.*

trees grow, streams flow, sun and moon rise and set, light and darkness come and go?" is a quite simple one. "For the same reason," he says, "that I move and run and lie down: they are all living persons." It equally naturally follows that when a man, animal, or tree dies, its "spirit" does not die but hovers near the spot where it dwelt in life, and enters some other object, be it plant, or beast, or man, and goes on living again.

More curious still, it is almost universally believed by savages that they have originally sprung from lower animals. In Australia men are supposed to have descended from kangaroos, emus, cockatoos. The same notions prevail among the Ashantees, Basutos, Peruvians, Bengalese, and the Jakuts in Siberia, &c. Stocks sprung from the same animal ancestor are "of one blood," and may not intermarry.

Equally firmly-established and universal is the belief that men can at will assume the shape of beasts. We need scarcely seek authentic instances (as we may) of this superstition so far afield as India, Arabia, Greece, or Egypt, for we shall find it lingering at our own doors. There is a well-known Scotch legend that a certain old witch transformed herself into a hare: on one occasion the hare was fired at, and it was discovered that where the hare was hit, there the witch had a wound also. Is it any wonder, then, that, near Loanda, Livingstone noted the common

conviction that a chief may change himself into a lion, kill any one he chooses, and then resume his proper shape. Hindoo and Pythagorean ideas of transmigration are based on this belief.

Absurd, laughable, fantastic as all these superstitions may appear to us, it is important to bear them in mind, for they explain such Bible anomalies as the devil assuming the form of a serpent, and Jehovah worshipped in the shape of a bull. They also directly bear on much that we shall meet with when examining the religion of Israel, which is otherwise inexplicable and senseless.

In every religion there is what we may call a sensible and a senseless, a rational and an irrational element. Even the ancient Greeks were perfectly conscious of this anomaly. The picture of the goddess Artemis "taking her pastime in the chase while her wood nymphs disport themselves with her, and high over them all she rears her brow, and is easily to be known where all are fair; known by her quiver and her lofty mien, she walks majestic, and she looks their queen:" this to the Greeks was a perfectly rational picture of a goddess, queen, and huntress; chaste and fair. But that this sublime goddess should change herself into a she-bear, as the Arcadians believed, the Greeks felt to be entirely irrational. In like manner Greek philosophers and poets were shocked at the senseless savage characteristics ascribed to their gods, at their infamous and absurd adven-

tures. They marvelled that divine beings could be looked upon as incestuous, adulterous, murderous, and thievish, or as transforming themselves into swans, beasts, or stars. Yet this senseless element was but a survival in historic days of the child-like creeds of older times.

Precisely the same phenomenon is to be seen abundantly illustrated, as we shall see, in Israel's religion. In the religion of every age, of every clime, of every people, this same irrational and senseless element survives. In it we see the wreckage of older beliefs, the waifs and strays of pre-historic religion, the fossilized remains of an older faith imbedded in the better and purer layers of latter-day creeds.

We shall never intelligently grasp the innate Hebrew belief in magic, witchcraft, necromancy, demons: their worship of sacred stones and trees: their devils and gods assuming serpent and bull forms: their tendency to revert to "lords many and gods many:" their conceptions of what is unclean or "taboo" to God: their belief in Azazel and a hierarchy of angels and devils: their "red heifer" and "waters of jealousy," and many other quaint rites, till we bear in mind that with the Hebrews, as with us all, religion had passed through many phases.

In process of evolution all religions go through various stages. We may instance three:—

(A.) We have already seen that in the earliest

phase of primitive man's beliefs all nature is alive. A world of spirits people the universe. These are mostly demons, powerful to do man grievous harm if not duly propitiated, and to their agency is ascribed every disease, accident, and death itself. The only way of warding off their evil influence is by spells and formulas known only to their sorcerer-priests; so in this stage magic is rife. Gradually these spirits, especially the most dreaded, are magnified into gods and worshipped at the sacred stones, trees and springs of water, which are themselves regarded as persons and gods. As both they and we are sprung from animals, these spirits or gods can at will assume animal shapes, as bulls or serpents, bears or swans.

(B.) A great step forward is taken when gods begin to be likened to men. Even then, however, the former stage still oft survives, and so we find the gods represented as half man and half beast, with the head of an animal and the body of a man, or with the body of an animal and the head of a man. Later still, we find these gods fashioned altogether in the likeness of men, and possessed both of man's moral and immoral attributes: they fight among themselves, are cruel, sensuous, vindictive, with few redeeming graces. Already, however, some of these polytheistic religions are becoming more moral and humane, though even then they lag behind the better thought of their day, and the more pious, philosophical and civilized

minds of the time express their dissatisfaction with their own creeds and try to mend or end them.

In this second stage magic is still rife. The gods also continue to be worshipped under the guise of trees, stones, or animals, but these are now only their abodes or symbols, and not any longer regarded as identical with the gods themselves.

(C.) The next stage is reached when these many gods are at last merged into some rude idea of one God. This is a long process, and, as we shall see when examining Israel's religion, many of the conceptions of the two preceding stages, especially the second, long survive in it. Only one people, the Hebrews, advanced to this stage. In Assyria and Babylonia, with their head-gods Asshur and Marduk, the idea of one supreme god was almost reached, but the spiritual conception of their head-god as a moral, righteous Governor was lacking. Asshur remained a great war-god, and Marduk a mere local national deity who falls with his nation.

In our study of religions we must also clearly bear in mind that every religion has two sides. We must carefully distinguish between its religious ideas and its religious acts, the doctrine it teaches, and the rites or ceremonies it insists on, and these two factors are seldom evenly balanced. Some religions are essentially dogmatic, others pre-eminently ritualistic, and rites die hard. In nature-worship and polytheism, religion's two first stages, ritual is

all-important; they are obliged little by little to let in the moral or spiritual element, but it is for them the beginning of the end when they do. The old bottles cannot contain the new wine and burst eventually. The new ideas are too full of life for the old rites; so it is that in the struggle for existence only such spiritual creeds as Judaism, Mahometanism, Christianity, and Buddhism have been able to bear the strain, and claim the title of "world religions." They overleap national barriers, and voice the aspirations of the human heart and mind. Judaism and Islam exalt the divine, Buddhism deifies man; the former exalt man's dependence on God, Buddhism emphasizes man's liberty, and so each is one-sided. Christianity alone fuses the divine and the human, blends dependence and liberty into a harmonized whole, and stands far above its rivals.

What has all this to do with the Old Testament? Much every way, for it is the key to its right understanding. Even Christianity has its roots imbedded deeply in the past: it is the outcome of Judaism, which in its turn is sprung from Semitic polytheism, and this again has its foundations in primitive nature-worship. At each successive stage the religion of any given period has been fostered by one or more of its predecessors, and has only superseded the older faith by taking up and assimilating the better and still living elements it contained. With all reverence it may be said, for example, that the

most sacred sacramental meal of the Lord's Supper, in memory of His Divine sacrifice on the Cross, focuses and fulfils the dumb and dim expectation of mankind's sacrifices through all the ages.

Each stage satisfies and is suited to its own day, for God is speaking by its medium to man in the only language he can understand. It was one step god-ward when man learnt to reverence something outside himself, even a demon-spirit: another step higher when he awoke to a conception of "many gods," at least as human if as immoral as himself: a far higher step when these in turn gave way to one God infinitely better and higher than man.

The bloody and ghastly ritual and accompaniments of early sacrifices repel us. Repugnant to our minds is the original idea of sacrifice itself as a common family or tribal meal where a victim is killed and eaten and his own portion is allotted for food to the god. Yet the same thing meets us in the Bible. Not only are the blood and fat offered to God as His share of the food in every sacrifice, but Gen. xviii. 1—9 distinctly represents Jehovah and two angels as eating cakes, butter, milk and veal in Abraham's tent at Mamre. More than this, from the root-idea of all sacrifice,—the common meal wherein a family or a clan share the flesh and blood of a living victim after it has been slain,—springs the conception which underlies all true religion, fellowship with God and fellowship with man. Thus was man unconsciously educated for thousands

of years not only for that Divine sacrifice of the Lamb without spot, which alone can perfectly unite us with God, but every act of sacrifice also expressed in its common meal the idea that man does not live for himself alone, but for his fellows. In very truth our beautiful faith in the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of man is but the ripe fruit of that tiny seed which was sown in the childhood of the world and watered with the blood of innumerable brutal and degrading sacrifices.

If the truths proclaimed by evolution are a fact—and who can doubt it?—the passage from the brute to the civilized man must be gradual and marked by much that shocks a modern Christian. In all countries and in all times the gods are made by man in his own image, and reflect the minds of those who create them. To a savage might makes right and fear comes before love. Wicked gods obtain the largest offerings and the longest prayers, so demon worship is rife. Evil is the raw material of good, base and cruel superstition the seed of religion. But the path leads ever forward, and as God's light grows clearer, and man's moral and spiritual eyes grow stronger to bear that light, public opinion reacts on the religion of the day and humanizes it. The history of religions has shown clearly in Babylonia, Israel, everywhere, even in the Christianity of the nineteenth century, that in the hands of its advocates and upholders religion is ever apt to lag behind the

thought and spirit of its age, till more enlightened minds force theology to get abreast of the times and voice the truths which are already alive, though hidden and unspoken, in many minds and hearts. Therefore, as we look back upon the crude, fantastic, savage religion of primitive man, and trace it step by step on its evolution to our present Christian ideal, let us take heart of grace. The advance already made has been immense, and there is yet far more to come. The clearer our analysis, the more complete our grasp of the stages in religion's development, the more shall we understand, appreciate, love our faith : the more shall we realize what poor material God had to work upon at the outset, the trouble and patient pains He has taken with man's education ; the more shall we believe in man's and our own great possibilities in the loving hands of such a Father.

Before closing this essay there remain one or two points worth noting, for we shall find them useful later on.

Perhaps we picture to ourselves our first parents and their children living a gladsome, innocent existence as a happy, harmonious family, whilst around them frolic together the lion and the lamb in that charming far-off age of innocence. We imagine this life as a model of virtue worthy to be set up as an example and aim to a degenerate posterity. We must not dream such dreams. Modern research unfortunately gives the lie to this charming romance ;

—no, not unfortunately, it is more inspiring to know that our path ever points onward, and that history emphatically assures us that the golden age lies before us and not behind. We shall see later that the Creation, the Fall, and the story of Eden are in truth beautiful word-pictures in which God inspires the Genesis writers to speak in parables, earthly stories full of a divine moral and spiritual meaning, gems of light and truth even as those we find in the parables of the Prodigal Son or the Good Samaritan. But they are parables only, embodying primitive man's ideas of a happy golden age, in the childhood of the world, which never existed.

Far from society having degenerated from an Eden-like simplicity of innocence we find that it is just the other way. "The world is very young, and has only just begun to cast off injustice," says a modern writer, and it is not true that man was moral and good and just in prehistoric days. There was an utter absence of justice and morality then, if we may follow Sir John Lubbock's lead, and judge prehistoric man by his modern equivalent and type, uncivilized races. "Uncivilized countries are for us a standing exhibition of prehistoric matters, museums where we find duplicates of objects which were thought to be lost or long since forgotten: each of them is a Pompeii, exhumed from beneath the rubbish of ages." If so—and many ethnologists go even further and say that modern savages, abject as

is their condition, are yet vastly superior to primeval man,—then everything tends to prove that mankind, far from being born with a vivid sense of right and wrong, had to evolve a moral sense by a long and painful process. When a modern Bechwana was asked what it is “to be good”; puzzled awhile, he finally answered: “To be good is to possess a wife and cows, and to steal one’s neighbour’s wife and cows.” We have also the Pawnee’s answer to the same question: “He is a good man who is a hunter, sly, crafty as a fox, daring and strong as a wolf.” Might made right in those days.

They were not a happy, innocent family then, these early peoples, for there was no family life in our sense at all. Men herded together and bred in those days much like a herd of cattle, and the love of the mother for her offspring was the only germ of any affection at all. The reason is not far to find. Man has passed through four stages: first, the hunting and fishing phase; secondly, shepherding and cattle-tending; thirdly, agriculture; lastly, industry and trade. In the two former stages men were nomads, and, certainly in the earlier hunting and fishing days, lived practically from hand to mouth, for their weapons and tackle were very inadequate. None but *men*, hunters and fishers who could procure food and fight foes, were wanted, for each additional person meant an additional mouth to feed: therefore most girl-children were promptly destroyed, and the few that were allowed to grow

to womanhood became the common property of the tribe. Every woman had a score of husbands, and kinship was necessarily traced through the female. It was only when man advanced to the agricultural or settled state that he wedded a wife as he wedded the soil, and family life first really came into existence.

Thus the happy united family life of the golden age in far-off past days is a mere myth, and so is the idea of primitive innocence, morals, and a sense of justice. In those very early days right and wrong are meaningless terms. To Australian aborigines the words good and bad have only reference to taste or bodily comfort. The whole tendency is to give everything to the strong, to the prejudice of the young and weak, and especially to the detriment of women. "To believe," says Sir G. Grey, "that man in a savage state is endowed with freedom, either of thought or action, is utterly wrong: offences in their eyes are light or grave according to the rank of the offender." "Conscience," says Burton, "does not exist in Eastern Africa. Repentance expresses regret for missed opportunities of mortal crime. Robbery constitutes an honorable man. Murder—the more atrocious the midnight crime the better—makes the hero."

Self-interest and a desire for self-preservation, seldom if ever tempered by unselfish considerations, are the rule. If there is any law at all it is embodied in the "custom" of the tribe, just as even in the

Judges period of Israel's history "no such thing is wont to be done in Israel" was a final answer. Vendetta is universal, and Israel's history again, with its code "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," and its regulations for blood-revenge, shows how long this primitive institution survived. Within the tribe itself there may faintly show some glimpses of humanity, friendship, some symptoms of a rude honesty: but toward all outside it, cunning and violence, murder and ruthless brutality are the rule, —and here again the bitter attitude of Jews towards strangers all through their history proves that in them this primitive trait died hard.

When we remember that the Hebrews even in the days of Moses were little if at all better than Bedouin Arabs now, and that the people who left Egypt under Moses were a "half-brutalized horde;" "that there was no such thing as acting on principle, but custom, and not morality, ruled supreme; a custom demanding, unconditionally, the execution of blood-revenge; some honesty towards one fellow-tribesman, but allowing deceit and cheating to be practised without scruple on a stranger: a custom which made sin consist not in wrong-doing, but in breaking a taboo, and thereby incurring guilt and uncleanness" (Kautzsch), we may see the object of this chapter. No one can study the books of Judges without recognizing, with Dean Stanley, that the "human, let us even add savage, barbarian element" survived long in the Hebrew character.

CHAPTER III.

SEMITIC AND BABYLONIAN INFLUENCE ON ISRAEL.

ISRAEL is a Hebrew tribe of the Semitic group of the large family of mankind, and each of these three factors must be taken into account. As men, the Hebrews will reflect in their religion, as well as in their face and character, the common human element which is to be found everywhere among mankind. On this common fundamental material the genius of the Semitic race will impress a distinct stamp or type of its own. The local tribe will further develop characteristic individual features.

We have roughly outlined the religion and culture of primitive man because it is the common mould in which the simple ideas of humanity were originally cast, and we shall find abundant traces of it in Israel's religion. In this chapter we propose to show how the Semitic peoples took this common-stock knowledge of humanity, and impressed on it a Semitic type. The rest of the book will indicate how, under new conditions, the Hebrew tribe further developed this common Semitic religion, and gave it a distinct and unique individuality of its own.

A.

Semitic peoples.

In the opening chapters of Genesis we are told that the Euphrates valley is the cradle of the human race. This is not strictly true, but it is a fact that here, so far as history tells us, we have the cradle of a people whose mission it has been to revolutionize the world spiritually,—the Hebrews.

We read in Gen. xi., xii.: "And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there. . . . Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation. . . . So Abram departed, and Lot went with him, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came."

On this passage Dr. Ryle says: "Here we have a historical tradition of a great nomadic movement of the Hebrews who migrated from Mesopotamia into Canaan." The very name Hebrew, "the people from beyond" the river, tells us the same story. So does Deut. xxvi. 5, where the Hebrews are

made to refer to their ancestor as "a Syrian (Heb. 'Aramæan') ready to perish was my father." Apart from the Bible, we know on the evidence of their language, customs, history, and ethnology, that the Hebrews are Semites.

Who are these Semites? They form a group of nations whose original home was probably the Arabian peninsula, and it is said that the Arabic language is upon the whole nearest the primitive Semitic speech. As a race they were originally nomadic, wanderers in the desert, hunters and shepherds, more or less like their descendants, the Bedouin Arabs.

They early divided into two main branches, the Southern and Northern Semites. The Southern, or Arabian branch, remained nomads and shepherds, like the Ishmaelites of Bible days. The Northern group became more easily civilized, and consisted of Semites who migrated from Arabia to the North-east and North-west. They became the races afterwards known as Babylonians (and Assyrians), Aramæans, Canaanites, and Hebrews.

Nomads by nature, ranging for countless generations in small bands over a vast desert, shepherds and herdmen reduced to an out-of-door roving life, the whole character of the Semitic people ever afterward was vitally affected by the hard conditions of their early life in remote ages. Prolonged droughts often compelled these nomad herdmen to migrate from one spot to another in search of

herbage and water for their beasts. The same cause often involved them in quarrels and bloodshed with each other over the use of some yet undried well or exceptional oasis of green pasturage left fresh among the brown and withered herbage around. Each little Arab horde had constantly to fight for its own hand and its own herd, and they naturally became a bold, hardy, roving race: lovers of freedom and impatient of control. This Semitic love of independence constantly asserted itself even when they settled down as nations. There was always a strong clannish feeling, but it seldom extended beyond the clan or tribe to the nation. They lived, even as civilized nations, in independent city-states, only united in the face of common danger, or when forcibly welded together by a strong ruling hand. They instinctively split up again, and reverted to the independent tribe whenever occasion offered. The history of Babylon, Canaan, and Israel fully bears this out.

Their innate faculty of surviving and prospering amid strange surroundings and conditions, of arousing themselves from chronic inactivity to almost superhuman daring and enterprise,—seen in the Jew to this day,—seems to be the manifestation of a big reserve power acquired through ages of undaunted persistence under hard conditions in the infancy of the race. Probably no people had such a prolonged experience of wandering over a vast desert in small hordes as the Semites.

Renan gives us an able and brilliant sketch of the characteristics of the Semitic race, but it must be accepted with caution, for it is drawn from a one-sided and partial point of view. He is too apt to throw back into the remote prehistoric Semitic past the distinguishing traits of the Babylonians, Israelites, and Arabs of historic days ; but he speaks as an expert.

As a race the Semites may be characterized as displaying the virtues and vices of a people who have long been dwellers in tents. They are patient, resolute, enduring, brave : faithful to friends, implacable to foes : full of impulse, ardour, and passion : rather sensuous : prone to lying and exaggeration : superstitious : crafty, cunning, and rather treacherous : of great mercantile aptitude, but with a bias to fraud and cheating. Their morality depends more on local usage and custom than on law or trained conscience.

In religion the Semites shared, with other primitive races, a belief in spirits pervading the universe, gradually resulting in stone and tree worship. There was no developed priesthood. The individual simply visited the tribal or other sacred spot with a gift of milk or first-fruits, or his animal-victim ; slew it with his own hand, and shared the flesh with the god, and with his own family, in a common meal. The share of the god was the blood which was smeared upon, or poured out beside, the stone, which was the deity, or, in later days, the " god's house." Trained in the

desert to absolute self-reliance, the primitive Semite owned no master or intermediary between himself and god. In grave matters beyond his own or his tribesmen's ken, he consulted his god by oracle or omen, and only then did he refer to others. Here a mediator was necessary, for this "voice of god" was through omens which only the skilled could read, and in certain cases the god could only be appeased by charms and spells known to none but his sorcerer-priests. Casting lots also revealed the god's will, and this also required a skilled interpreter.

In matters of thought, Renan maintains that the Semites were practical rather than speculative: full of common-sense and worldly wisdom, they confined themselves to questions and problems of actual life and cared little for abstract questions of philosophy. Their literature is, therefore, a mirror of themselves, full of sensuous, passionate imagery, taking a delight in the play of fancy and emotion, nature-loving, full of word-pictures. It is the literature of a people of an emotional temperament and imperious will, subordinating everything to action and desire, seeing the whole universe through the medium of personal feeling. A creature of the emotions, swift to seize on anything that touches the feelings, intense in its love and hatred, full of ardour and passion, the Semitic character has produced some of the finest lyrical and emotional poetry the world has ever seen, but very little real philosophy. As a people, they are skilful interpreters of nature's language,

and of the human heart: they compose beautiful poems: their religion is simple, practical, and sublime: yet it all bears the stamp of sensuous, passive, oriental reverie.

The sensuous trait is seen in the Semitic religion throughout. To take but one instance. The more refined and intellectual Greek aspired after a future life mainly because it carried with it release from the gross material flesh which blurred the pure soul's clearness of vision. The emotional, sensuous Semite felt nothing of this burden of the body, and required that, if life was to be restored hereafter, the body so dear to him was to be restored also.

To complete our Semitic sketch, we may add that the physical features of the Semites are thus described by Brinton, the ethnologist: "Dolichocephalic (long) skull: curly and abundant hair: slightly wavy or straight strong beard, the colour predominantly black: prominent nose, straight or aquiline: oval face."

B.

Babylonians.

In dealing with the Semites, our ground is more or less insecure. The period in which the Hebrews, Arabs, and other Semitic nations formed a single united people is far too remote and prehistoric for positive definite facts. It is not till we come to the Babylonian group of Semites, the immediate

ancestors of the Hebrews, that we are on solid historic ground. Within the last thirty years Babylonian history has had to be rewritten. Before 1870 we were practically dependent on old historians, like Herodotus, for our knowledge of Babylon and its institutions. Since that date extensive excavations have brought to light contemporary documents which give us as accurate and exact a history of Babylonia as any we have of an ancient country. A whole library has been unearthed carrying back its authentic records to the remote past. A few years ago the year 4004 B.C. was soberly accepted as the date of the creation of the world; to-day we have Babylonian written historical records far earlier than this date, and recent excavations have brought us evidence which leads to the clear inference that a high state of civilization had been attained in the Euphrates valley 9000 years ago. There are, no doubt, gaps in these historical documents, but some of the tablets date between 4000—3000 B.C., some other records in the British Museum are labelled 4500 B.C., and there are others still earlier, representing even then an advanced stage of culture.

The first great Semitic King of Mesopotamia of whom we hear is Sargon, who came into power in 3800 B.C. Many contemporary tablets of his reign have been discovered. He ruled all Babylonia, and his sway extended to the Mediterranean. A legend relates how "he was born in concealment, and set

adrift in an ark of bulrushes on the waters of the Euphrates,"—the probable source of the Moses legend.

We have seen both from the Bible, and on positive historical grounds, that the Hebrews are an offshoot of the Babylonians, and, without some clear knowledge of their Babylonian ancestors, the religious and moral history of Israel will be unintelligible. It will be as impossible to unravel as would be our own English character and history if we deliberately ignored all consideration of the heavy debt we owe to our Saxon and Norman forefathers.

The Babylonians settled early in the Euphrates valley. It attracted these Semitic nomads because it was already a rich, populous, cultured, and highly-civilized plain, where they could enter on other men's labours, and reap a rich harvest. "To spoil the Egyptians" is a peculiarly Semitic trait at all times. In the Euphrates valley agriculture was first practised by the Semites with large and rich results, and soon there followed trade by river, sea, and land, even at a time when Egypt was still undeveloped: probably as early as 6000 B.C. Prof. Sayce believes that the original inhabitants before these Semites came were the Sumerians, a highly-cultured race of non-Semitic stock, whose language was retained by their Semitic conquerors side by side with their own to the very last for official and legal purposes.

The name Babylonia is now used throughout the

history of these Semitic dwellers in Mesopotamia, but in early times there were many important and independent city-states, and it was not till 2300 B.C. that Babylon became the seat of government. In 2250 B.C. Khammurabi, or Hammurabi, made it the head of the Babylonian Empire, a supremacy it retained till 729 B.C., when Assyria wrested the power from it, and in 689 B.C. Babylon was destroyed. It was partially restored, but Cyrus, King of Persia, conquered it again in 528 B.C., and brought it under Persian rule.

The Canaanites, an offshoot of these Babylonians, were the first to leave the Euphrates home and migrated Westward till they reached Palestine. Thither followed them, long after, the Hebrews. But long before Canaanites or Hebrews had migrated there, the Babylonians had already gained a foothold on it, led Westwards by their zeal for conquest, exploration, and self-enrichment. They held this land as part of their empire till 1600 B.C. Even when they relinquished their political hold on it, the Babylonian sphere of influence continued strong there. This we know from a famous recent "find," the Tel-el-Amarna clay tablets, which show that in 1400 B.C. the Babylonian language was the recognized means of official diplomatic communication in Palestine, Syria, and all over Western Asia.

Naturally, therefore, seeing that Hebrews and Babylonians are both sprung from one common

Semitic stock; that for very many centuries they lived together in the cultured Euphrates valley; that the Hebrews came to Palestine, impregnated with Babylonian ideas, direct from Babylon; and that for centuries longer the two were in close relationship and constant intercommunication, it stands to reason that their religions, customs, laws, and habits of thought must have very much in common.

What, then, was this Babylonian religion? It was a religion of "gods many and lords many," polytheism with a strong colouring of primitive nature-worship. Out of the earlier beliefs in spirits or "zi" (Arab "jinn"), peopling the universe, had evolved a creed in superior "spirits" or gods, and each city had its patronal god. Eventually three gods superseded the rest, Ea, the god of the people of Eridu, a city on the Persian gulf: Bel, the great god of Nippur, in the North: and Anu. Anu was god of heaven; Bel, of the earth and lower air; Ea, of water. As we shall see in the Creation and Flood stories, Bel was not a kind god, Ea was very gracious to man. Each god had a wife, but Ishtar (the Bible "Ashtoreth"), the goddess of reproduction in nature and mankind, was by far the most important and revered. She was generally worshipped with licentious rites.

The supremacy of Babylon in 2250 B.C. naturally made its patron god Marduk, or Merodach, the chief god, for the conquest of the peoples of other gods

meant in those days that the conqueror's god had beaten these other gods. As a new and younger god he is represented as the "son" of the older national gods, but he at once becomes lord of lords.

In course of time a state-religion was established in Babylon, religion became early centralized, temples were transferred to regular holy places, and in these places "houses of god" were built on a magnificent scale. The priests, who had only been caretakers or doorkeepers of local shrines, now rose to a dignity and importance which they had not when holy places were numerous and scattered. Services and rites became more ornate, and the Babylonians possess a rich stock of liturgical services, full of prayers, hymns and penitential psalms. Sacrifices, which the individual had originally offered himself, now devolved on the priests, and, at the central temples, became a daily practice. On great Festivals pilgrimages were made from all parts to these famous temples. The 7th day of Nisan and eleven days after were specially sacred, but the 7th, 14th, 21st, and 28th days of the month were Sabbaths, rest and fast days, on which nothing whatever was to be done.

Omens, oracles, casting lots, divination, were the regular methods of consulting the god's will; and there is a rich Babylonian literature on the subject. Omens were obtained from sacrifices, oracles through the priests, divination by pouring oil in a cup, and as priests alone had the secret of interpreting these

things, they soon obtained a tremendous hold on a superstitious people.

But side by side with this state religion there was a popular religion which had struck far deeper root into the hearts of the masses. It was the real religion of Babylon, as distinguished from the religion of the learned priests. In countries where two distinct classes exist, the one intellectual and learned, the other illiterate and degraded, there will be in reality two religions, as a rule, though nominally there may be only one. Among the ancient Sabaeans the one class adored spirits who inhabited the stars, the other class adored the stars themselves. In Roman Catholic countries images are, to the learned class, aids to devotion, books for those who cannot read: the illiterate regards the image as itself a god. Similarly, in Babylon, though the learned class had outgrown this rude faith, the real popular faith was a survival of old primitive creeds; a firm belief in spirits, magic, evil demons. These spirits, mostly harmful, lurked everywhere, were invisible if they chose, and could pass through chinks, or hide themselves in open vessels or holes. They could enter animals, especially snakes, or any other object. All disease, accidents, even death, were attributed to their malign influence. They could only be averted, or expelled, by charms, spells, incantations, the exact formulas of which must be used, and these were known only to sorcerer-priests. Even the state religion abounds in incantation-hymns.

The gods could be approached, consulted, propitiated by sacrifices consisting of animal-victims, meat-offerings, drink-offerings, fruits of the earth. The sacrificial animal, generally a lamb, must be spotless. The sacrificer had to don a proper dress, guard himself against any personal impurity, assume the right position, and speak the proper words.

Up to the last, among the people, all heights and mountain-tops, all sacred trees, stones, wells, specially associated with powerful "spirits," were "houses of god," and shrines were often built there.

Their conception of life after death is just what we find in all primitive religions. The souls of the departed were relegated to an under-world, somewhere in the bowels of the earth. Thither a shadowy outline of man's body went after death: good and bad were all huddled together there. Life in this nether world was a mere shadowy existence, featureless, lifeless, inane: with no joy, no activity, no excitement. The Babylonians called this place Shelu, and the idea and name (Sheol) are exactly reproduced in the Old Testament.

Such was the religion in Babylon when the Hebrews left it to go to Canaan. Did they carry any of this religion away with them? How could it be otherwise? For countless centuries they had dwelt in Babylonia; they were Babylonians pure and simple. Naturally, they brought away with them all the religious, moral, and mental equipment of Babylonia. They were steeped in its religion, or

superstition, call it which we will. On their arrival in Palestine they found there the Canaanites, another Babylonian tribe but belonging to an earlier stage of its civilization, still with traditions more or less like their own. For centuries after their arrival, as the Tel-el-Amarna tablets show, they were in constant touch with Babylon. In Israel's religion, therefore, we must expect to find a Babylonian basis. Judaism will only be the readjustment of old Semitic material to meet new conditions in faith and practice. We shall see in our next chapter that Genesis was written about 1000 B.C.; yet even thus late there are strong indications of Babylonian influence in its pages.

Eden is the Sumerian word for the garden or well-watered plain between the Tigris and Euphrates. A Sumerian hymn describes a magical tree, the tree of life, which grew in a garden in the centre of the earth, and speaks of the good god Ea walking in this garden. An ancient Babylonian gem also portrays a tree on either side of which are seated a man and a woman, with a serpent behind them, and their hands are stretched out towards the fruit hanging on the tree.

In the Genesis account, the four rivers of Eden are Pison, Gihon, Hiddekel, and Euphrates. Two of these rivers are the Babylonian Euphrates and Tigris, for Hiddekel is the Sumerian name for the Tigris. Pishon is a Babylonian word for "canal" or "water-channel." Gihon is supposed to be

Kerkhah or Gukkan, the stream on which Babylon was built.

Adam is the Babylonian for "man." Babel, the tower where the confusion of tongues took place, is clearly Babylon, and the story is clearly the Babylonian story which tells us how "certain men turned against the father of all the gods, and built a huge mound or tower: but the Winds blew down their work, and Anu confounded great and small on the mound, and their speech, and made strange their counsel."

We shall see later that the Creation and Flood stories of the Bible have a palpable Babylonian origin.

But, over and above these loan-stories, there is much more. The original scaffolding, the skeleton-framework of the two religions is the same. Even from our hasty survey of Babylon's religion we can see how closely the Hebrew religion originally followed its Babylonian source.

- (1) The Genesis stories of Eden, the Creation, the Flood, and Babel are purely Babylonian.
- (2) The earlier Bible books show clear traces not only of polytheism in Israel, as in Babylon, but also of an earlier nature-worship. Up to the days of Moses, at any rate, the Hebrews firmly believed in "spirits," and regarded many trees, stones, springs as sacred "houses of god."
- (3) Up to quite a late period, magic and witchcraft

- were practised commonly by the Hebrews. Saul's consulting the witch of Endor, and the constant injunctions and heavy penalties against the practice, show the prevalence of it.
- (4) Omens at sacrifices (e.g. Cain and Abel's), cups of divination (e.g. Joseph's), oracles (e.g. Ephod, Urim and Thummim), casting of lots, were as common methods of consulting God's Will in Israel as in Babylon.
 - (5) Groves, heights, mountain-tops were associated with the licentious worship of gods in Israel up to the days of Hezekiah.
 - (6) The Babylonian goddess Ashtoreth (Ishtar), with her impure worship, was as revered in Israel as in Babylon, in spite of prophetic denunciations.
 - (7) The development of sacrifices and priests in both countries followed the same order. Noah's idea of sacrifice as a means of appeasing an angry god—"the Lord smelt a sweet savour, and said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more"—is exactly the Babylonian view of sacrifice. The priests in Israel, as in Babylon, start as mere caretakers and custodians of images or of local "houses of God," and only become a sacrificing caste very much later.
 - (8) Even in David's day (1 Sam. xxvi. 19) God, in Israel as in Babylon, is regarded as only a local god, powerful in his own land, power-

less outside it. Just as Nippur, Eridu, Babylon each had their patron-god, so had Israel and other nations. Marduk only became chief god when Marduk's people conquered their neighbours; so, in the conquest of Canaan, even the Hebrews thought that Baal was the true god of the Promised Land till Jahweh, Israel's god, had beaten and conquered Baal's people and, therefore, their patron-god.

(9) The Jewish Sabbath in name and idea is the Babylonian Sabbath.

(10) The Hebrew Sheol in name and idea is the Babylonian Shelu.

This list could be prolonged indefinitely, but this must suffice. It is only in proportion as we realize the heathen darkness of the Hebrews at the outset, wallowing in Babylonian superstition, that we shall appreciate the marvellous advance they made under God's guidance and discipline. The Bible's aim is to place clearly before us the various steps in the stupendous revolution accomplished by the Hebrews in their development from polytheism to monotheism, from the recognition of many local gods to the worship of the one true living God Who is the moral Governor of the whole universe. The process was necessarily very slow and gradual, "by divers portions and in divers manners" (Heb. i. 1), step by step, light following light as they were able to receive it. We shall see Israel struggling in the

grasp of two contending forces: ancient customs and beliefs, aided by the influence of surrounding heathen peoples, pulling the Hebrews downward: prophets of the Lord urging them upward to purer conceptions and a more spiritual faith. There will be many relapses, followed by recovery, but the trend is ever a forward movement.

Again, when we fully grasp the primitive, rough, crude material on which God had to work at the start, the low and unformed moral and spiritual conceptions of these early Hebrews, we shall understand much in our Bible which at present shocks us. We shall judge these Hebrews with a larger and broader charity. A nation's moral ideas are not higher than the morality which they themselves attribute to their god. Christianity has planted deep in our hearts the conception of a God Who is a loving, righteous Father. Naturally, out of this have sprung humaner thoughts of what man owes to man, and a strong sense of sympathy and consideration for others has leavened and softened our character. Israel's idea of God, on the other hand, in the days before the prophets, was the conception of a Jehovah Who was strong but vindictive, a friend to His people's friends but a terrible foe to their enemies. They had little or no idea of a God, righteous, loving, and merciful. Is it any wonder that we read in their history tales of cruelty and treachery, of wicked craft and wholesale massacres?

The more clearly we grasp the gross, crude materialism of Hebrew religion at the outset, the more truly shall we see God's Hand in their history. We shall clearly realize the gradual revelation, the gleams of light with which He visited this people and gave light to them that sat in darkness. We shall also be more ready to judge the early Hebrews with a larger and more intelligent charity.

Supplemental Note.

Not only is there this close relationship between the Babylonian and Hebrew religion, but within the last five years another famous "find" has attracted the attention of Oriental scholars.

In 1902, at Susa, was discovered the Code of Hammurabi (2250 B.C.) in its original autograph form, all but intact, containing 49 columns, 4000 lines, and about 8000 words, dealing in 282 sections with every possible case of law. In many respects it bears such a strong general resemblance to the so-called Mosaic code of a much later date that the likeness has led critical historians to this verdict: "The Babylonian and Mosaic codes are conceived in the same literary form: they contain a considerable number of practically identical laws: they present not a few cases of actual verbal agreement, and both are designed for the regulation of a civilized community. The parallels are too close to

be explained away. Israel learnt in Babylonia and Palestine ancient Babylonian folk-lore and myths, why not their laws as well? We believe that the code of Hammurabi of 2250 B.C. passed more than a thousand years later into the Book of the Covenant, and so became the heritage of Israel and of the world" (Prof. Johnston, Johns Hopkins University Circular, 1903).

Be this as it may, the Mosaic code does show many traces of Babylonian influence, though the essential differences point to an independent hand.

Our notes on the influence of Babylonian ideas upon Israel would be incomplete without some reference to one other matter,—the growth of a system or hierarchy of angels and demons in Jewish religion,—and though it belongs to the period after the Captivity, it naturally falls under the heading of this Chapter.

In the Old Testament, *before* the exile, angels only appear occasionally, and in the Prophets they are hardly mentioned at all. So with devils: we see the serpent (a Babylonian survival) in Genesis, but, before the exile, the only other place where he is named is as "Azazel" (Levit. xvi.), an evil spirit supposed to dwell in the wilderness, to whom on the Day of Atonement is sent a scape-goat, laden with the sins of the people. This is also a survival of an older superstition. In Is. xxxiv. 14 mention is made of Lilith, a satyr, a bad female

demon, or hag of the night, and very dangerous: but this is a post-exile myth of Babylonian origin.

After the Exile we suddenly find in the Old Testament a whole system of angels and demons divided into regular orders from archangels and archdemons downwards, with God at the head of the one hierarchy, and Satan of the other.

How are we to account for it? It must have arisen during the Captivity, when the Jews in the sixth century B.C. came under the direct influence of the Persians. The Persian religion divides the universe between Ormuzd, a god of light and good, and Ahriman, a god of evil and darkness. Ahriman is ever at war with his rival and adversary, the good god. Each god is represented at the head of his hosts of angels and demons who are respectively marshalled under their subordinate officers.

This dualism deeply affected Jewish thought, for it offered such a plausible solution to the problem of evil. Here was a key to the strange disorder of the world which had so long puzzled them; it explained why "the wicked prosper, and the righteous go to the wall." This was a problem which all Jewish thinkers had faced, an anomaly which they could not understand or reconcile with the Providence of a righteous God.

Therefore the Jews readily accepted this solution of the problem, and, after the Exile, we see it strongly colouring Job and Daniel; we find it in Zechariah, and the late books of the Chronicles

(1 Chron. xxi.), in the Apocryphal and Apocalyptic books, and all through the New Testament.

In other ways, also, Persian religious ideas seem to have stimulated Jewish religious thought. In the Persian Avesta there is a picture of war in heaven, followed by the binding of the fiend, as in the Apocalypse. A new heaven and a new earth also follow the final judgment and destruction of the powers of evil. The idea of an individual resurrection and a millennial expectation likewise developed early in Parseeism.

But as with Babylonian, so with Persian influences, all we can say is that they came as suggestions to the Hebrews and stimulated Jewish religious thought. Both in Babylonian and Persian theology there is a mass of undigested and indigestible rubbish; a crude, coarse, childish materialism which is altogether absent in the lofty, purified, spiritual Hebrew canonical Prophets. The points of resemblance between the Hebrew religion and the others only bring out into clearer and stronger relief the immense gulf which separates them, the clear and decided independence of Jewish religious development under God's own guidance. Here again, even if the Jews are indebted to Persia for a small loan, they made excellent use of the borrowed material and turned Persian clay into Hebrew gold.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MOSAIC BOOKS—A COMPOSITE WORK.

WE are now in a position to enter upon a critical examination of the Old Testament. It is now agreed on all hands that the Hexateuch, or so-called Books of Moses, in the shape in which we possess these writings, could not have been written by Moses. They are clearly a compilation of late date, the work of several writers living at dates very wide apart. Much of the contents of these earlier books is not history at all. These works are great religious prose poems mainly based on folk-lore, though in broad outline the historical tradition contained in them is trustworthy. In the following chapters we propose to discuss this question in detail.

It may help to throw some light on what we have to say, and elucidate our arguments, if we pave the way by a very brief analysis of these books of Moses, then state the modern view of their origin and composition, and finally give the reasons which have led critics unanimously to accept these results as true and assured. To proceed in this order is putting the cart before the horse, reversing the proper

logical order of things, but it may make our meaning clearer. In much of what follows we are indebted to Prof. Wellhausen.

The Mosaic books consist of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and to these we must add Joshua, for together these six books form one literary whole. As a law-book the first five are complete in themselves, but as a history the work is so planned that Joshua is its natural and necessary complement. It is not the death of Moses, but the conquest and possession of the Promised Land by Abraham's seed, which forms the true dramatic conclusion of the history beginning with Abraham and the promise of this very land as his inheritance, followed by the bondage in Egypt, the escape from it, and the long sojourn in the wilderness. The natural ending of it all is the fulfilment of God's original promise by the triumphal entry of Abraham's seed into the Promised Land under Joshua. From its very idea, plan, matter and style Joshua must be included as the last act in the drama.

These six books, therefore, are now always taken together under the name of the Hexateuch, and they naturally fall into three clearly-defined divisions, marked off by distinctive features giving each group an unmistakable individuality of its own.

Genesis and Joshua are purely historical. They give us a strikingly fresh, natural, vivid, pleasingly dramatic picture of very early days. No later writer has drawn so many living portraits, such a graphic

sketch of any age. True, they are but portraits, portraits of men such as they seemed to the painter, not as they really were, and as such must we judge them. But, if we have not here the living men, we have in their place such absolutely inspired impressions, so full of life and movement, that we are carried away by the freshness and simplicity of the finished work. We find it difficult to conceive that the writers were not actual eye-witnesses, but had to draw on folk-lore and oral tradition for materials to portray for us such marvellously dramatic representations of character and action. Their creations are real living men in actual flesh and blood. So intent are the narrators on their subject, so heartily and sympathetically do they enter into the story they have to tell, they are in such living touch with their national heroes that they never stop to point a moral or introduce comments of their own; though, as born Hebrews, they all unconsciously colour the narrative with the deep-seated Hebrew conviction that in all ways Jehovah guides the footsteps of His chosen people. In their enthusiasm for individuals the plan of their history hangs loosely. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua stand out in bold relief against a fragmentary background of history. Their biographies form a series of living portraits without parallel in the Bible.

Such in brief are the chief characteristics of their work, so bold in its impressiveness yet full of

romantic charm. "It breathes a sweet poetic fragrance, and in their writings heaven and earth are naturally blended into one."

Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers.—The general tone of these books differs so widely from that of Genesis and Joshua that we seem to have been transported suddenly from the pages of Homer or Froissart to the uninteresting study of a dull history-book. No longer braced by the vigorous atmosphere of those "elder times when truth and worth were still revered on earth, and the tenants of the skies would oft descend to spotless heroes' homes," we breathe the lifeless air of dry lists and tedious genealogies. The light seems suddenly to have faded from scenes where angels and God walked and talked with men. Living figures animated by love and hate, and swayed by like passions as ourselves, vanish, and with them the miracles and all the play of light and fancy. All the local colouring, the vivid personal touches of Genesis and Joshua are gone, and in their stead we have the stilted artificial mannerism of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. A barren genealogical scheme takes the place of stirring narrative, flashing and sparkling with life. Long dry lists of names, a marked predilection for exact numbers and measures face us at every turn. The language becomes poor and inflexible, the arrangement dull and formal, certain stereotyped expressions found nowhere else in the Hebrew writings occur with tedious repetition. Such legends

as are given no longer recall the natural voice and language of living men steeped in folk-lore, but are obviously dry extracts from other writings. The fervour of enthusiasm is lacking in the authors and consequently lacking from their work. In order to impart a semblance of accuracy to the whole, precise and apparently authentic lists, details and numbers are introduced which upon closer inspection prove utterly untrustworthy. The historical construction of the books is artificial and fictitious. The authors write with an evident purpose,—that of introducing their new law,—and make use of the narrative quite obviously as a mere framework to the more important object of law-giving. In Genesis and Joshua the story is the end in itself into which the writers throw their heart and soul, carrying conviction with every word. In Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers the historical element is introduced merely to give weight and credibility to all-important legal matter. Never once losing sight of this object they give to their theme an air of profound erudition, apparently so reliable and genuine with its long genealogies from Adam to Joshua without a break, till a closer analysis reveals that after all it is but spuriously precise and exact. The pearls of the old writers' stories are stripped off and all that remains is a thin thread. Genesis and Joshua, in a word, are living story-books pure and simple; Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers are law-books and nothing else, with a loosely-constructed scaffolding of history put

there merely to prop up their law, and give it a semblance of a connection with a period with which it stands in no form of relationship.

Deuteronomy has for centuries been felt to stand in a group all alone by itself. In one aspect it resembles Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, it is a law-book; but in every other respect it rises to a far higher level. Deuteronomy deals mainly with laws concerning moral conduct in man's daily life, and with such religious observances only as affect the people generally. Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers lay their whole weight on public worship in the Temple at Jerusalem, assigning immense importance to its ceremonial and ritual; attention is concentrated on the purely technical points which specially touch the priests, as distinguished from the worship of the people.

True to its name, which implies a second or later law, Deuteronomy addresses itself to a people already settled in the Promised Land, and bases its law entirely on this supposition; whereas the authors of the other law-code, studiously avoiding any reference to so late a period, lead us to suppose that their law was written for and addressed to Israel while still wandering in the wilderness. This is part of their artificial scheme; the intention was evidently to give their writings the value of ancient documents.

Another striking feature of Deuteronomy, which places it in a class by itself, is its sublimely spiritual

and moral tone. Throughout its pages a spirit breathes suggesting an almost Christian ideal. So impressive and exalted is its teaching that we find no parallel to it in the religious history of Israel until the time of the prophet Isaiah. This religious light and truth is so strikingly in advance of the age commonly ascribed to it that to attribute such writing to the time of Moses appears almost as incongruous as finding a modern treatise on the evolution theory interwoven with literature of the Elizabethan period.

Thus we see that from internal evidence the Hexateuch naturally subdivides and splits up into three main groups:—

(1) A purely historical section, Genesis and Joshua ;

(2) Deuteronomy,	{	Law-books, widely apart in character and style, each supplied with a his- torical thread connecting it with its period.
(3) Exodus, Leviticus,		
Numbers.		

For reasons which will be mentioned later, modern students have unanimously arrived at the conclusion that Moses did not write a single one of the books called after his name. The dates now assigned to them are as follows: (1) Genesis and Joshua, 10th or 9th century B.C. (2) Deuteronomy, 7th century. (3) Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, 5th century.

It had been suspected for centuries that the Mosaic authorship of the Hexateuch was open to

question, but such suggestions naturally ran far ahead of the laborious critical investigation of details necessary to solve such an important point.

As early as the 17th century, attention was drawn to such passages as :—

Gen. xii. 6: "The Canaanite was *then* in the land."

Gen. xxxvi. 31: "These are the Kings that reigned in the land of Edom, *before there reigned any king over the children of Israel.*"

Deut. xxxiv. 5: "So Moses, the servant of the Lord *died* there."

Deut. xxxiv. 10: "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses."

Numb. xii. 3: "Now the man Moses was very meek," &c.

It was observed, even three hundred years ago, that it is at least unusual for an author to record his own virtues, or to describe minutely the circumstances under which he departed from the earth: that the writer speaks to readers who had forgotten Canaanite days and were living under kings. "Not a prophet since like unto Moses" necessarily compares Moses with many later prophets. Also it was pointed out that places such as Hebron and Dan are called by these names, whereas they were given to the localities long after Moses' day. But although the Mosaic authorship of the historical

portion was questioned, the Law-books were believed to be his work.

At that time there was no really sound basis for criticism to work upon, and ingenious attempts were made to get over the difficulty raised by the passages just quoted: but the spirit of inquiry moved forward.

The first great clue was found in 1753, when Jean Astruc made the great discovery that entire sections of the Mosaic books called God by the name of Jehovah, while equally large portions knew Him only by the title of Elohim. Here was laid a real solid foundation for sound criticism. We shall see in our next chapter how a critical study of the Hebrew text in these Jehovah and Elohim sections respectively soon revealed other important clues, and this discovery of Astruc has immensely helped forward the solution of the Hexateuch problem.

In 1805 de Wette added another strong link to the chain of evidence. A minute study of the later books of Judges, Samuel and Kings revealed the marvellously strange fact that all through the period covered by these books the so-called laws of Moses were ignored and evidently unknown. For instance, if the clear instructions as to the election of a king given in Deut. xvii. 14—20 were known in Samuel's day, why does 1 Sam. viii. 7 make it such a heinous sin to ask for a king? (cf. Judg. viii. 23). De Wette also pointed out that the Deuteronomic law abolishing altars in high places, and outside Jerusalem generally, was not known or practised in Israel till

Hezekiah's and Josiah's days. Other passages, as he showed, were equally incomprehensible if the writers of Judges, Samuel and Kings had any knowledge of the Mosaic books in our present form; therefore he concluded and proved that Deuteronomy, at least, was a late work. He also indicated that several portions of the Hexateuch, in important points of law even, flatly contradicted each other; that the history of the book of Genesis was untrustworthy; and that the religious and moral tone of the whole series is centuries in advance of the Mosaic age, and must be due to the fact that the writers lived very much later than was commonly supposed.

But it was Graf, and his pupil Kuenen, who discovered the real clue. Working on the lines suggested by their predecessors, Astruc and de Wette, they showed in a way that carried conviction with it that the Hexateuch naturally subdivided into three distinct groups, and proved the truth of their hypothesis by further showing how exactly it corresponded with the actual facts of history. 2 Kings xxii. gave them the key to the whole problem.

The most uncritical reader of Genesis, Joshua, and the so-called Book of the Covenant (Exod. xx. —xxiv. 26) can see, on the clear evidence of the books themselves, that they were written at a period when altars and sanctuaries were common all over the land. Jehovah comes to His worshippers and blesses them, not in Jerusalem only, but

at every place where they erect Him an altar, and the patriarchs set up altars wherever they reside. The narrator speaks of them as existing and still hallowed in his day. The altar of Abraham at Shechem is the same on which sacrifices are still offered: Jacob's anointed stone at Bethel is still anointed.

Deuteronomy shows a complete change. Jehovah is to be worshipped in Jerusalem and nowhere else. Deut. xii. 2 *orders* the destruction of these numerous local altars and sanctuaries on hills and heights and under green trees, and repeatedly *commands* that Jerusalem shall be *the* one place of Jehovah's worship. All this is clearly directed against current usage: "Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day" (xii. 8). The many altars and sacred places recognized and hallowed by Genesis, Joshua and Exod. xx.—xxiv. are now deemed offensive and heathenish. Deuteronomy orders and commands the abolition of these many local shrines which had led to license and irreligious practices; its law is clearly aiming at a reformation of these abuses, but the reform has not yet been successful.

Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, on the other hand, all along take it for granted that Jerusalem is the one sanctuary of Jehovah and there is no other. These books know of no other place where God dwells and can be approached by His worshippers, no other spot where man can seek God's face

with sacrificial gifts. While Deuteronomy demands as a reform that should be accomplished the limitation of worship to the one sanctuary, Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers tacitly assume it as a long accomplished fact. The reform of Deuteronomy has long since taken place and is no novelty now.

As already hinted, Graf showed that 2 Kings xxii. supplies us with the key to the whole problem. This passage tells us that the turning-point in the history of Israel was the centralization of Israel's worship in Jerusalem under King Josiah (621). Till then there had been a multitude of local sanctuaries and altars all over the land, the lawfulness of which no one had ever dreamt of disputing before Hezekiah's day (720—680). Hezekiah first attempted to reform them, as the worship at these local shrines had grown licentious, but his reformation was only half-hearted and partial and produced no lasting effect.

Josiah's reform went much deeper. It was thorough-going, and made a permanent impression on Israel's religious history. In Josiah's own day the success was not pronounced ; but on their return from the Captivity the Jews were intent on a complete reform and deeply imbued with the spirit of Josiah's ideas, which they carried out to the very letter. From that day there was no thought of worshipping Jehovah except in the one place where He had caused His name to be celebrated, His Temple in Jerusalem. It was the one and only sanctuary.

With these facts before us, there can be no shadow

of a doubt that Graf's solution of the problem is correct, and on this basis alone we can approximately fix the dates of the three Mosaic groups:—

- (1) Genesis, Joshua, and Exodus xx.—xxiv. must have been written during the period first mentioned, when many local shrines were recognized and hallowed as consecrated by patriarchal precedent; that is to say, certainly before Hezekiah's day.
- (2) Deuteronomy exactly corresponds with Hezekiah's programme of reform, and is of that date.
- (3) Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers belong to the period after the Captivity, when Jehovah's worship was definitely centralized in Jerusalem.

Graf and Kuenen's great discovery was made in 1870, and the last forty years have only confirmed still further the results achieved by these scholars. In our next chapter we shall give fuller proofs advanced by modern Bible students who have loyally, reverently and laboriously carried on Graf's work, and convincingly established the truth of his conclusions.

It may be asked, "If the writers of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy composed their works at such a late date, close on a thousand years after Moses, why did they ascribe their laws and books to Moses? Is not this literary forgery?" For a full answer to this natural ques-

tion we must refer our readers to Chapter XVI., where the subject is treated in detail. Here we shall only mention that the Hebrews had no idea of literary property in our sense of the term. In their eyes Moses was the father of all laws, David of all psalms, Solomon of all wisdom and proverbs: therefore any legislation after Moses, any psalm-writer after David felt in honour and duty bound not to take to himself the credit of his own laws or religious hymns but to ascribe them to the source of his inspiration, Moses or David. This was done not, as we may fancy, to give the weight and authority of these great names to their new productions,—it might have this additional effect as well,—but simply to give each of these great Founders his due. Each of these giants of literature was regarded as fully entitled to receive all the credit for anything new discovered in his own particular line of thought: the new author was a mere pupil inspired by the master and counted for nothing. It may seem strange to us, but it is a high ideal, and to call this literary forgery would be a gross libel.

CHAPTER V.

THE MOSAIC BOOKS (*continued*).

IN the preceding chapter we have rapidly sketched chronologically the successive steps which have led modern students of the Bible to the unanimous conclusion that the so-called Mosaic Books are really, not the work of Moses but a mosaic composite compilation. We now propose to show how recent scholars have applied the important clues supplied by Astruc, de Wette, and especially Graf; what splendid results they have achieved, results based on the soundest historical and textual criticism. The scholars of many nations have contributed their share; their labours have been prolonged and arduous; their analysis has been most searching, exact, and scientific, characterized throughout by soberness of judgment and scholarly completeness. We may therefore accept their conclusions as assured.

Briefly stated, the main grounds on which these experts base their decision may be grouped as follows:—

- (1) Pronounced differences in style and language are apparent in the Hexateuch.

- (2) Different titles are given to God in various portions of the Hexateuch.
- (3) The conceptions of God and the religious views in the Hexateuch represent at least three markedly different and inconsistent phases of thought.
- (4) The moral and social conditions also belong to at least three different periods.
- (5) There is a want of continuity in the narrative ; frequent unnecessary repetitions occur ; passages often entirely inconsistent and contradictory stand side by side.

We shall take these arguments in their order, examine them, and then give the conclusions arrived at by modern scholars.

(1) *Differences in style and phraseology.*—A qualified literary critic, after his many years of patient study and practice, by merely glancing at a page of classical English literature, can at once fix its date and probable authorship from its style, phrasing and subject-matter. By a kind of instinct or second nature he can authoritatively state to what school and period of our literature the passage belongs. The reasonings by which these results are obtained are very delicate and complicated. Not only has every age, school and individual literary work a style of its own, a partiality for certain words and phrases, an essentially distinctive atmosphere and habit of thought, a peculiar mould in which the very sentences are cast, but there are

a thousand and one delicate touches of light and shade which none but an expert literary critic can appreciate. To quote the words of one of their number: "It should be realized that such differences of style as we can feel and weigh go far beyond what can be expressed in so many words; just as we can recognize a friend's face, or even his step or handwriting, from a thousand, although we could but very imperfectly describe the manifold peculiarities which make up its individuality of character."

Literary Hebrew critics have subjected the Hexateuch to the most searching test—not one or two critics only, but scores of them, past-masters in the sphere of textual criticism, both in England and abroad—and after a rigorous and scientific analysis of its style and conception, they have unanimously reached one conclusion. They assure us that the Hexateuch belongs not to one school or period of Hebrew literature but to four, at least, widely apart in date. More than this, not only does textual criticism clearly prove this fact, but there is undeniable positive evidence that the Hexateuch was frequently re-edited and revised, and that, over and above the four main groups of which it is composed, the text was constantly added to, altered, re-touched from time to time down to the third century B.C.

To fully appreciate the proofs adduced by these experts in support of their assertions,—the result of the critical investigations of three-quarters of a

century,—would require a profound knowledge of the Hebrew text. We may give one instance which they quote, though it is a piece of evidence on which they themselves do not lay much stress. Such phrases as “cleave to Jehovah thy God,” “prolong thy days in the land”; “serve other gods which neither you nor your fathers have known”; “that it may be well with thee”; “that thou mayest possess the land,” are phrases of constant occurrence in Deuteronomy *and nowhere else in the Hexateuch*. So it is with individual words, and the same thing applies to each of the four groups which form the Hexateuch. To such a pitch of perfection has textual criticism attained nowadays that literary critics can decide not only what chapters or verses, but even what portion of a verse must be allotted to this group or that.

(2) *Titles given to God*.—Jean Astruc in 1753 made the great discovery that in large portions of the Hexateuch God is only known by the name of Jehovah; in others, again, He is consistently called Elohim; while in a third group these two titles are blended. Even in Astruc’s day this was regarded as a valuable clue; but literary criticism was not understood then as it is now, and it is only recently that scholars have been able to reap the full harvest of his great discovery. Following Astruc’s clue, with their advanced knowledge of textual criticism still further guiding them, Bible scholars have already divided the Hexateuch into five main groups

on this basis alone of the titles given to God in its books.

In what follows we must remember that, owing to frequent revisions, the Hexateuch is of an extremely mosaic and composite character. Into each of the groups subsequent editors and revisers have introduced passages which belong to later periods, and there is not one book which does not bear clear traces of many groups. The Hexateuch has been quaintly but admirably likened to a "patchwork-quilt made up of four or five different bits of stuff differing in material, texture, pattern and colour, with smaller embellishments, borderings and the like added to improve the general effect of the whole." This exactly represents the facts. So when we speak, in what follows, of Genesis, Exodus, or any of the Books, our reference must be understood to apply to the book generally and not to all its parts.

The five sections into which the Hexateuch naturally falls, on the basis of the evidence supplied by the titles of God, may be thus given:—

- (a) The Jehovah section, the oldest of all ; probable date ninth century .B.C. This is called J for brevity.
- (b) The older Elohim section, slightly later in date ; some time between the ninth and eighth century B.C. This is called E for brevity.

These two groups between them compose Genesis and Joshua.

- (c) Portions of the Hexateuch where J and E are

blended together. They are scattered broadcast, but are easily detected and catalogued by critics. This is called JE for brevity and belongs to the earlier prophetic period, about 750 B.C.

- (d) Deuteronomy, based mainly on the JE revision; called D shortly. Date 750—650 B.C.
- (e) Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, a very much later Elohim group with an artificial air of antiquity, but unanimously referred to a late date, after the Exile. Its probable date is the fifth century B.C. It is called the Priestly Group, or P for brevity. The writers of this group, not content with their large contribution to the Hexateuch, "revised the whole Hexateuch, pieced together its various writings in such a way as almost everywhere to make their own line of thought the foundation of the whole, and wherever possible to adapt the other writings to their own pattern" (Kittel). The very first chapter of Genesis is their work.

(3) *Religious views and conceptions of God in the Hexateuch.*—In this and the following section we have merely an application of Graf's clue, which is the key to the whole problem. Modern critics have only elaborated and made more clear and convincing what Graf detected forty years ago. In the Hexateuch there are clearly to be found side by side three layers of religious and moral thought which could

not possibly have been co-existent in the days of Moses ; neither can we for one moment suppose that all three narratives in which they occur can be attributed to any one author living in those early days. Not only are these three layers of religious thought far in advance of anything in the religious views of Moses' day, but they exactly correspond with three well-known stages in the actual religious history of Israel.

In Genesis and Joshua we find one conception of God which represents Him as talking, walking, eating with men. He is regarded as a war-god Who is strong but not humane, and whose sphere of influence is limited by local considerations. He is the God of Israel as He was known to His chosen people before the days of the canonical or writing prophets.

In Deuteronomy we have a conception of God highly spiritual in its character. He is a God Who is loving, righteous and merciful, and we have to go down to the prophetic period between 700—600 B.C. before we can find a parallel to it.

When we pass on to Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, the religious attitude has become hardened into an ecclesiastical creed. Religion and worship are clothed in a web of ceremonial formalities. The conception of God is exactly the idea of a God Who is to be approached in the precise, formal way such as we find it in the period after the Exile. Deuteronomy bears the strongest family likeness to the

religion of Hezekiah's day ; the Priestly Code exactly mirrors the views of Ezra's day and after.

These three layers of religious thought would not be so strange or confusing if they followed each other consistently in a natural order. If, for instance, the whole of Genesis and Joshua gave us the original, primitive, elementary conception of a God Who is strong but not humane ; then came Deuteronomy with its spiritual idea of a God Who is loving, righteous, and merciful ; and lastly, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers with their formal, priestly, ecclesiastical creed,—we could easily thread our way through this labyrinth. But all three conceptions of God are so inextricably mixed up and intertwined in each book that we become confused and hopelessly lost in a maze. In the very first chapter of Genesis, and in many passages before the Flood, written after the Exile ; also in the whole of Deuteronomy, composed about the time of Hezekiah, the impression left on our minds by the Bible narrative is that the Hebrews of these very early days had already reached a remarkably high plane of religious and spiritual development. They almost seem to breathe the spirit of an Isaiah, Jeremiah or Ezekiel ; whereas we know that the social, moral and religious condition of Israel in the period covered by Genesis was essentially elementary, primitive, crude. Even if it had only opened our eyes to this fact, we should feel deeply grateful to modern criticism, for it has rendered our

reading of the Bible far more intelligent and made its message more intelligible.

(4) *Customs and institutions of Israel in the Hexateuch.*—Here again we discover side by side three distinct strata of development, exactly corresponding with three stages in the actual historical evolution of the Jews. Let us take, by way of illustration, the treatment of slaves, and the accounts of Jewish Festivals, as given in the Hexateuch.

Slaves.—In the older sections of the Hexateuch we read that if a man enters bond-service unmarried, and then marries a slave-girl in his master's household, the wife and the children born to him by her shall not accompany the husband to his home in the year of his release from bondage. In Deut. xv., on the other hand, a far more humane view is adopted, for it is stipulated not only that the woman shall be freed as well (Driver), but that the master on releasing his slave shall provide him liberally from his flocks, his corn, and his wine.

In Leviticus we find a new regulation. In the year of Jubilee (Jubilee is only mentioned in the Priestly Code), *all* Jew bondmen are to be set free in a body in that year, and return to their homes.

Festivals.—Originally there were only three great festivals, all agricultural: the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of harvest, and the feast of ingathering—with no fixed dates. People were guided as to date by considerations of weather and climate, as in Harvest Festivals. Hence the expression

“Thou shalt proclaim a feast unto the Lord,” that is, invite people duly to keep it by publicly intimating the date.

In the Priestly Code, on the other hand, the agricultural character of the Festivals survives only in the Feast of Harvest (or Weeks), so their date is now definitely fixed. Not only has the number of these feasts greatly increased, but they have now become strictly ecclesiastical or Church festivals. They now consist of (1) Passover, and unleavened bread, Abib 14th, (2) Pentecost (originally Feast of Weeks, or Harvest), Sivan 8th, (3) Tabernacles (originally Ingathering), Tisri 15th, (4) Day of Atonement, (5) New Moon, (6) Feast of Trumpets.

It is only after the Exile that we find a parallel to this in Israel's history.

(5) *Repetitions, inconsistencies, contradictions in the Hexateuch.*—Not only are there frequent unnecessary repetitions of the same facts, but very often these double accounts contradict each other.

Look at the Creation story in the two first chapters of Genesis. In Gen. i.—ii. 4 man and woman are created together on the last day; vegetation is created on the third day as soon as there is dry land; and man receives the whole earth as his portion: “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.”

In Gen. ii. man is created first of all before anything else, and is at first alone, so woman has to be created out of him later on. As to vegetation,

instead of it springing up as soon as there is dry ground, Gen. ii. 5, 6 tells us that there was already dry ground, but vegetation could not spring up because God had not yet caused it to rain. Also, instead of receiving the whole earth as his portion, in Gen. ii. man is placed in a mysterious garden, with a very limited sphere. There is no division into days in Gen. ii., the older story.

So it is, again, with the Flood stories. One Genesis account makes it last 54 days, the other, 150. Gen. vi. 19 bids Noah take into the Ark one pair of every kind of animal, Gen. vii. 2 seven of all clean beasts, and two of the unclean.

In Gen. xvii. 17 and xviii. 11 Abraham and Sarah are so old that the birth of a son to them is regarded as an unheard of miracle; yet in Gen. xx. 2 Abimelech is enamoured of Sarah and takes her to wife, as Abraham palmed her off as his sister; while in Gen. xxv. 1—6 we read that after Sarah's death Abraham marries again and has several children.

In one chapter of Joshua we read that the tribes were allotted their respective portions of the land of Canaan before crossing Jordan, and then had to go and conquer them for themselves; in another passage of Joshua we are told that Joshua first conquered all Canaan, then allotted each tribe its portion.

These inconsistent double accounts might be multiplied almost indefinitely.

We are now in a position to summarize the main conclusions reached by critics after a very careful

reading of the Hexateuch with all these clues to guide them.

There are at least four main and easily distinguishable groups :—

- (1) *Genesis and Joshua*, dealing with the pre-historic history of Israel.
- (2) *Exodus xx. 22—xxiii. and xxiv. 3—8* is a group in itself. It consists of a body of civil and religious laws of a simple and primitive character. They are described as written in a book (xxiv. 4), and marking the establishment of a special covenant between Jehovah and the nation of Israel; hence it is called the "Covenant Group" (C).
- (3) *Deuteronomy* differs as widely from the rest of the Hexateuch as the Gospel of S. John differs from the Synoptics, it is so highly spiritual in tone. The name Deuteronomy ("second law") is a mistranslation, but well represents the reformulated law as given in this book.
- (4) *Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, a group of books marked by the ceremonial, legalistic, ritual, priestly spirit.

Bible students have unanimously arrived at the conclusion that the old view that Moses wrote these books is wholly untenable. He may possibly have written passages of Jewish history and law here and there. These may have been preserved and embodied in the Hexateuch, but, if so, we have now

no means of identifying them, and the likelihood is strongly against any portion of the Hexateuch really being his handiwork.

It is also clear that no portion of the history given in these books was written anywhere near the period which it professes to describe ; in Genesis, for instance, not till a thousand years, at least, after the latest events mentioned in it.

We must, therefore, not expect Genesis to give us exact and accurate facts of history, as we now understand history ; it is rather what we should call idealized history. The Bishop of Ripon thus describes it : " It is not easy to discriminate between parable and fact, between folk-lore and history, between tribe and individual ; these books may contain relics of early times, but they cannot be regarded as contemporary chronicles ; they represent the efforts of men of a later age to explain the conditions of things around them. Not being men of any critical power the writers have gathered loosely certain traditions, old songs and stories, records of old laws and customs, tales of national heroes. The patriotic feeling of a later age carries back the ethical superiority of historical Israel to prehistoric times ; the writers breathe their own religious spirit over picturesque stories long current among the people." We find samples of these old songs and folk-lore in the Song of Deborah, the Song of Triumph at the Red Sea, the Prayer of Moses, the Blessing of Jacob, all of

which Prof. Driver considers to be of great antiquity. Prof. Driver maintains that "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are historical persons, and the accounts given of them in Genesis are true *in outline*, but their characters are idealized, and their biographies largely coloured by the feelings and associations of a later age."

In Joshua the history is rather more true, for it is on the border-line of contemporary history, but it is still prehistoric.

The first attempt to collect these old traditions, songs, folk-lore, so as to form a connected history, was probably made between the tenth and ninth centuries B.C. The Jehovah and Elohim versions of it give us two independent accounts of the same facts, and the Jehovah account is rather the older of the two.

About 700 B.C., a code of religious and civil laws and customs, Deuteronomy, commonly supposed to have been revealed to Moses by God, was embodied in the Hexateuch. It was this code which was read aloud in the hearing of all the people in the reign of Josiah (630 B.C.). This code was afterward provided with a historic setting, and we get Deuteronomy as we now have it.

During the time of the Jewish Captivity a new body of ritual law, much more precise, minute, and detailed, was drawn up, probably by some disciple of Ezekiel, and also embodied in the Hexateuch as Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers. To give this Priestly

Code a historic setting of its own a new version of the whole history of Israel was re-written. More than this, the other books of the Hexateuch were revised, touched up, altered, added to, and brought more into harmony with the spirit of this new code.

After some further revising and re-editing the Hexateuch finally assumed its present form, probably about the third century before Christ.

CHAPTER VI.

FOLK-LORE AND LEGEND IN GENESIS.

WE have said in former chapters that "the Genesis stories of the Creation and Flood were palpably derived from a Babylonian source," and that "it is not easy to discriminate between fact and parable, folk-lore and tradition in these early books." We now propose to justify these statements by a critical examination of four incidents mentioned in Genesis: (*a*) The Flood; (*b*) Creation; (*c*) patriarchal longevity; (*d*) "There were giants in those days."

The Creation and Flood stories clearly form part of those primitive legends, noticed in a previous chapter, which may be called "human" because they are practically the same among almost all races. They are to be found in every quarter of the globe. Now, we have seen that the Hebrews are of pure Babylonian origin, therefore the Hebrew versions of the Creation and Flood stories will mainly reproduce Babylonian features, though they will also have much in common with other similar legends found all the world over.

Here is the Babylonian account of the Flood, said

by experts to be at least 5,000 years old. It is contained in a cuneiform inscription on tablets preserved in the British Museum, and first deciphered by Prof. G. Smith in 1872. We quote Prof. Sayce's translation. Sisuthros, the hero of the Flood, who had been taken up by God, like Enoch, without dying, is made to tell the story to Gisdubar. "Sisuthros speaks to him, even to Gisdubar: Let me reveal unto thee the story of my preservation, and the oracle of the gods let me tell to thee. The city of Surippak, on the Euphrates, was already old when the gods within it, Anu, Bel, Adar, set their hearts to bring on a flood. Ea, the god of wisdom, sat along with them, and repeated to me their decree and said: 'O man of Surippak, build the ship, save what thou canst of the germ of life. The gods will destroy the seed of life, but do thou live, and bid the seed of life of every kind mount into the midst of the ship. The ship which thou shalt build . . . cubits shall be its length . . . cubits its breadth and height.' I understood and spake to Ea, my lord: 'The ship if I shall build on dry land, the children of men and old men will alike laugh at me.' Ea opened his mouth and said: 'If they laugh at thee, thou shalt say unto them, every one who turns against me and disbelieves Ea's oracle that has been given me, I will judge. But, as for thee, enter the door of the ship, bring into the midst of it thy corn, thy goods, thy household, the sons of the

people, the cattle of the field. Shut not the door till the time comes of which I will send thee word. The beasts of the field I will send unto thee.' Fourteen measures high and broad I built the ship. Three *sari* of bitumen I poured over the outside ; three *sari* of bitumen I poured over the inside ; I divided its interior seven times." Then follows a description of the building of the ship, and storing it with food ; then the sun-god fixes the time of the flood, saying : " In the night will I cause the heaven to rain destruction. Enter into the midst of the ship and close thy door." A vivid picture of a terrific storm is then given, a pitchy black cloud, great thunder, a fearful hurricane, rain literally in sheets, the wholesale destruction of "the wicked," mountains and plains wholly submerged, "The deluge reaches unto heaven, all that was light to darkness was turned. In heaven the gods feared the flood, and like a dog in his kennel, crouched down in a heap. Istar, the great goddess cries, and the gods wept with her." On the seventh day the storm subsides, and Sisuthros opens the windows and sees "corpses floating like reeds." The ship rests on mount Nizir. "I sent forth a dove, it went and returned and found no resting place ; then a swallow, and it came back ; then a raven, it saw the carrion on the water, and it ate, and swam, and returned not. I sent forth the animals to the four winds, I sacrificed a sacrifice. The gods smelt the savour ; the gods smelt the good

savour ; the gods gathered like flies over the sacrifice. Thereupon the great goddess lighted up the rainbow ; the crystal brilliance of the gods I may not forget. May the gods come to my altar ; but may Bel not come to my altar, since he did not consider but caused the flood, and my people he assigned to the abyss. When thereupon Bel saw the ship at his approach, Bel stopped ; he was filled with anger against the gods : ‘Let none come forth alive,’ he cried. Then Ea opened his mouth and spake to the warrior Bel, ‘Thou O Bel, why didst not thou consider but causedst a flood ? Let the doer of sin bear his sin, let the doer of wickedness bear his wickedness. May the just not be cut off, may the faithful not be destroyed. Instead of causing a flood, let lions, hyaenas, famine, plague increase that men may be minished. I did not reveal the determination of the great gods. To Sisuthros alone a dream I sent, and he heard the determination of the great gods.’ When Bel had again taken counsel with himself, he went up into the midst of the ship. He took my hand and bid me ascend ; he united my wife to my side ; he turned himself to us and joined himself to us in covenant ; he blesses us thus : ‘Hitherto Sisuthros has been a mortal man, but now Sisuthros and his wife are united together in being raised to be like the gods.’”

It is hardly necessary to indicate the points of agreement, in many cases the very wording and

phrases of Genesis are found in the original. In both stories—

- (1) God reveals to the man the divine intention to bring a flood upon the earth, and commands him to build a ship, and save the germ of life, both of man and beast of every kind.
- (2) The ship's dimensions in cubits as to height, breadth and depth are given by God: "rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and pitch it within and without with pitch. The length of the ark shall be 300 cubits," &c.
- (3) God commands food for man and beast to be taken into the ship; and shuts the door.
- (4) The picture of the storm is similar in both (cf. Gen. viii. 2, vii. 17 sqq.).
- (5) Both Noah and Sisuthros "open the windows" and look out, when the flood subsides.
- (6) Both send out a dove "which finds no resting place" and returns, and a raven, "which went forth to and fro" and did not return.
- (7) Both build an altar and offer a sacrifice immediately after leaving the ship, and in both cases "the Lord smelled a sweet savour."
- (8) In each story the ship rests upon a mountain.
- (9) In both cases, the God who has caused the flood makes a covenant with the man, and gives him a blessing.
- (10) The rainbow is then first lighted up.

These points clearly show the Babylonian source of our Bible story, and we must remember that the old legend had been ages upon ages in existence when Genesis was written. Even in the original we already see indications of a moral spirit which could not have existed in the primitive legend; where Ea expostulates with Bel for destroying good and bad together. In the 2,000 years elapsing between the writing of this Accadian story and the Genesis written version the moral spirit would still further have developed, and it is striking that there is so very much of the original left after all that length of time.

But if the points of agreement are striking, the points of dissimilarity are equally great. In Genesis the childish puerilities of the original have mainly vanished. In the place of the gods of the Babylonian version, wrangling with each other in jealous rivalry, crowded trembling "like a dog crouching in his kennel for fear," or "gathered like flies over the sacrifice," Noah's God is a righteous God Who hates His children's sins, but loves them still. He is not like Bel, a god who needs the intercession of Ea before he will consent not to destroy the faithful with the guilty, but One Who Himself says in His heart, "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake."

Even though it is true that the Genesis writers found this old Flood story handed down from the religious mists of a far-away past, we still see the Holy Spirit's inspiration in the way in which they

were guided to select the wheat from the chaff. They give it a peculiar and original stamp of their own, both by their idea of One righteous God, and by the moral significance so emphatically given to the catastrophe. Years ago, in a sermon preached at Oxford, Canon Liddon used words which may rightly apply both to the Flood and Creation stories : "The early history of Genesis may suggest traditions belonging to ancient pagan peoples living in Mesopotamia ; the original text of its genealogies may lie buried in brick libraries as yet unearthed ; it may be proved that Jewish Revelation did not come to us from God in any but a natural sense,—yet all this only shows that behind it all was a Holy Spirit guiding and inspiring these Hebrew writers of old to select from a large field those materials which would best illustrate the great truths He had in view." So it is that in God's hands even pagan legends can be purified and so used as to become the vehicle of great religious truths and principles.

There is no need nowadays of pointing out that the Bible story of a universal Flood is not a strictly exact historical fact. All the water in the world would not nearly cover the mountains, and how could *all* kinds of animals have been got together from all over the world ? How could any Ark, however large, have held specimens of each kind, with all their food ? How could eight people have looked after them ? The story is clearly one of a group of primitive pre-historic legends found all over the world. Whether

it merely recalls the tradition of some great local flood is a moot question. The line of thought which suggested a world-wide deluge to Accadians, South Sea Islanders, Chinese, Eskimos, American Indians, Greeks, Mexicans, &c., is almost beyond our comprehension, and one of the hardest problems in primitive folk-lore. No satisfactory answer has yet been given.

Creation.

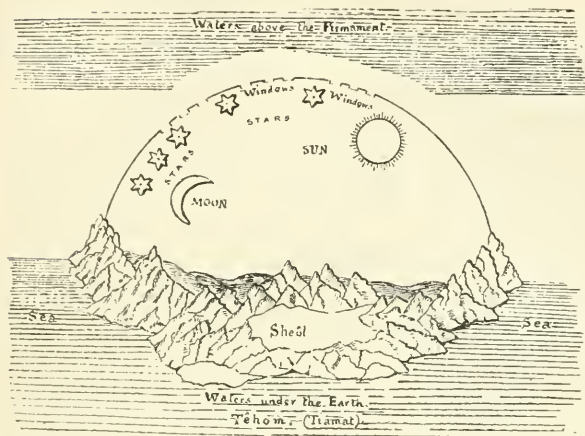
“What is the origin of the world?” is a problem which has everywhere exercised man’s thoughts, and primitive myths, in the shape of stories, are primitive man’s reply to this question. These vary in quality with the civilization of the races in which they are current, but the same fundamental ideas pervade all the answers, savage or civilized. They all waver between two theories, creation out of nothing, which is rare, and evolution out of some elementary matter, and this is the much more common notion. The earth, as a rule, is supposed to have grown out of something already existing, an animal, an egg, a fragment of soil, water. Such ideas are not found in the lowest stages of man’s culture; it already implies some power of thought. As a rule, the lowest races hardly speak of the making of the world. Among people more advanced, the earth is supposed to have somehow grown out of the waters, either from the water itself as the material

out of which it was made, or more commonly from earth fished up from the bottom of the water, as among the Tacullies of British Columbia. The New Zealand aborigines trace back the creation to nothing and darkness. Most primitive nations say the world sprang from an animal or man torn to pieces, and out of the fragments were made heaven and earth. Some cannot go back so far in thought, and fancy that in the beginning heaven and earth were united in loving embrace, but some dreadful tragedy occurred, and the earth and sky were torn asunder as we see them now, and the dewdrops every morning and evening are the tears of heaven and earth over the sad divorce.

Strange as it may sound we shall see that the Genesis account repeats primitive man's creed of a world sprung from water as the primal element, and also embodies the idea of heaven and earth as formed from the mangled portions of an animal torn in pieces.

22-31 The Old Testament contains three accounts of the origin of the world : Gen. i.—ii. 4, ii. 4 sqq. ; Prov. viii. 22, 31. The first is complete ; the second is generally supposed to be fragmentary ; the third is highly thoughtful but poetical.

To understand the Babylonian and Bible Creation-story we must picture to ourselves the ideas about the universe current in Babylonia and among all Semitic people. The following diagram, based on that given from Jensen in *Hastings' Dictionary*, will greatly help us.



We are told in Gen. i. 2, "And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God moved upon (or 'was brooding upon') the face of the waters." Another translation is, "Now the earth was chaos, and darkness was upon the face of the flood (Tehom), and the wind of Elohim was hovering over the face of the waters."

So, before the days of Creation, all that existed was (1) darkness, (2) The chaos of waters, (3) the spirit, or wind, brooding over the abyss of waters. The great mass of waters was there already, and upon this the earth, when afterwards created, floated. We must remember that the three expressions "waste

and void," "deep," "waters" in Gen. i. 2 are one and the same thing, and all express the original chaotic watery abyss called in Hebrew Tehom, in Babylonian, Tiamat.

The first act of Creation was light, even before there was a sun. Similarly the Egyptian god Thoth "gave the world light when all was darkness, and there was no sun." This idea was once ridiculed, but science almost endorses it now.

The second creation was the firmament, which all primitive people regarded as a solid vault or dome supported at its base by earth's mountains as its pillars. The firmament had windows. Above this firmament was all the mass of the "waters above the earth," which descended to earth as rain through these windows or openings of heaven; e.g., in the Flood (Gen. viii. 2).

The earth was conceived as floating upon the watery abyss, Tehom. In the great flood the waters not only poured upon the earth from the mass of waters above the firmament, but also ascended through clefts in the earth from the great nether abyss of waters. "The same day were all the *fountains of the great deep broken up*, and the windows of heaven opened" (Gen. vii. 11). After the flood, "the fountains of the deep, and the windows of heaven were stopped" (Gen. viii. 2). Similarly, in the Malay peninsula, the aborigines hold that a thin crust covers the earth, and, in the flood, God broke the crust so that the waters below oozed through it

and covered the whole earth. So also thought the natives of British Guiana.

More than this—and it is a strong point in the proof that the Hebrews copied the Babylonian Creation-story,—even in the Bible the great watery abyss under the earth, Tehom, was regarded as a dragon or sea-serpent, and images were made of it. Thus in the second Commandment: “Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image of any thing in the water under the earth.” Sometimes this dragon is called “Rahab,” a dragon which fought with Jehovah, and was conquered by Him: “Art thou not He that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?” (Is. li. 9). So, again, “In that day the Lord with His sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, the crooked serpent, and He shall slay the dragon that is in the sea” (Is. xxvii. 1). We see the same conflict between the Creator and this dragon of the sea, Rahab, in Job ix. 13, R.V., xxvi. 12, R.V., and Ps. lxxxix. 10, R.V., and elsewhere. We shall see that this undoubtedly goes back to the conflict in the Babylonian Creation-story in which Marduk, the Creator of the world, vanquishes Tiamat (the watery abyss), the dragon, and her eleven helpers, by cutting her in two and forming heaven and earth out of the two halves.

This is the Babylonian Creation-story: “When heaven above had not been named, and earth below yet bore no name, yea, the deep, the flood of the sea was she who bore and produced them all, their first

creator. Their waters were embosomed in one place. As yet there grew no plants at all. At that time the gods had not issued forth. Then were the gods Lakhmu and Lakhamu born. They grew up. . . . Next were made the host of heaven and earth. The time was long; and then the gods Anu, Bel and Ea were born, and Marduk son of Ea, Marduk creator of the world." After these gods had sprung from chaos, or the flood, or Tiamat, a strife arose between Tiamat,—the dragon and her eleven helpers,—and the rest of the gods. At last Marduk fights in single combat with Tiamat,—the god of light with the goddess of darkness,—cleaves Tiamat in two with his sword, and with one half of Tiamat fashions the firmament of heaven, where he assigns their places to the gods Anu, Bel, Ea, and to the moon and the stars; while out of the other half of Tiamat he fashions the earth. The eleven helpers of Tiamat he placed in the sky as signs of the zodiac, Marduk himself being the twelfth. The stars, moon and sun were ordered to rule over the night and day, and to determine the year, with its months and days. After this Marduk created the animals, and lastly man. "At that time the gods in their assembly created the living creatures. They made the living beings come forth, the cattle of the field, the beast of the field, and the creeping thing."

The tablets are in parts terribly mutilated, too much so to yield a connected sense, but Prof. Sayce believes the last tablet probably contained

an account of the institution of the Sabbath (Sayce, "Fresh Light").

The parallels between the Babylonian original and the Hebrew copy of the Creation-story mainly lie in the fact that in both the world consists in the beginning of water and darkness. The Hebrew name for this watery abyss, Tehom, is the Babylonian Tiamat. The Babylonian story of the Creator cutting Tiamat in two is clearly seen in the Bible, not only in Gen. i. 7: "God divided the waters under the firmament from the waters above the firmament"; but still more clearly in the allusions to Rahab, already referred to in Isaiah, Job, and Psalms, where the dragon of the deep is vanquished and cut in pieces by Jehovah. As Prof. Sayce points out, "in both stories the fourth day sees the creation of sun, moon, and stars; even the very wording and phrases of Genesis occur in the Babylonian version; and though no fragment is preserved which expressly tells us the Creation was accomplished in seven days, we may infer that such was the case, from the order of events as recorded in the tablets."

An interesting fact has been noted in connection with the word for "to create" in Gen. i. It originally meant "to carve"; thus still further carrying out the idea of the Creator cutting Tiamat in two.

But if the parallels are clear, still more self-evident are the striking points of contrast. Most primitive peoples evolve the gods themselves from whatever

clement they select as the original source of all things. Thus Mr. Tylor quotes the Japanese origin of the world: "while the earth is still soft like mud, or like oil floating on the surface of water, there arises out of the soft mass the rush-plant, from which there springs the land-forming god." So the primitive originators of the Babylonian Creation-story taking water as the germ of all things, first make this watery abyss produce the gods, and these create everything else out of it. In Genesis, the mythological taint and childish element vanish. God, the Creator, does not Himself originate from the "deep," but existed long before; there is no longer a crowd of rival created gods, but a sublime conception of one God Who existed from all eternity. The Genesis writers set God above everything, and yet closely and lovingly linked with it all, "He sees everything that He has made, and, behold, it is very good." The Bible account also assigns a high dignity to man placed next to God; created in His image and likeness to be, under God, the ruler of all created things. Already is laid in the first two chapters of the Bible the foundation on which Christ bases the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man.

As elsewhere in the Bible, the Holy Spirit enables the inspired writers to take a pagan primitive legend, and so purify it as to become the vehicle of a great religious truth. He shows them clearly the Divine source from which all things have flowed; man's dignity and close kinship with God, his Creator and

Father. All else is of secondary import. God might easily have revealed the exact order and details of the Creation scientifically. He does not, and the Bible was never meant to be a science-primer. If God had given early men this scientific account, it would have been absolutely unintelligible to their primitive intelligence; while this simple parable, or earthly story with its spiritual meaning, they could perfectly grasp, and so can we. It is for modern science to determine the details of the steps in the evolution of the world, and it is slowly doing this work.

"There were giants in the earth in those days."

The giants before the Flood are quite distinct from the later giants, such as the historical Goliath of David, who is real. These pre-deluge giants are mythological, as may be seen from the account given of their origin: "There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the *sons of God* came in unto the *daughters of men*, and they bare children to them; the same became mighty men, which were of old, men of renown" (Gen. vi. 4). Here we certainly have an allusion to that region of mythology so abundantly illustrated in the sacred legends of other ancient peoples, the race of heroes or demi-gods; like the Titans and the giants whose birth from heavenly and earthly parents is sung by Hesiod in the *Theogony*. In Talmudic writings we

also read that the first man reached from earth to heaven, but, after his sin, the Holy One laid His hands upon him and made him little.

Till quite recently it was commonly supposed that pre-historic man was immensely huge. Ethnology and geology have exploded this fiction, a survival of early folk-lore to be found in all countries. Homer, for instance, is full of it, and tells us that men nowadays are dwarfs in size and strength compared with the heroes and mighty men of old.

These old legends of immense giants may be accounted for in various ways.

- (a) Like the Anakim of Hebron, in the days of Joshua (cf. Numb. xiii. 33 ; Deut. ii. 10, iii. 11 ; Josh. xi. 21, 22, xiv. 12, 15), they may be dim traditions, exaggerated through the mist of ages, of pre-Israelite barbarians, hurling huge stones in their rude warfare. Giant-legends of this class are common in Europe and Asia, recalling the big uncouth native barbarians, exaggerated into monsters by the later and more civilized tribes who dispossessed and slew them.
- (b) These giant stories may also be due to the common opinion that mankind has gone on degenerating, and that we are in every way worse and smaller than our forefathers ; whereas established facts point altogether in the other direction.

- (c) The probable real source of all these giant myths is the discovery of great fossil-bones, of saurians and mammoths, which have from early ages been supposed to be bones of giants. Even as late as 1712 a tooth weighing $4\frac{3}{4}$ lbs. and a thigh-bone 17 (??) feet long having been found, Dr. Increase Mather thereupon communicated to the Royal Society of London the confirmation this discovery clearly afforded of the existence of men of prodigious stature in the world's infancy! (v. Philosophical Transactions, vol. xxiv. p. 85.) *See ~~Exata~~ p. V*

Patriarchal longevity.

It is exactly the same thing with the enormous ages of patriarchs before the flood. These pre-deluge patriarchs are given in two lists, one early (J) the other late (P).

<i>J.</i>	<i>P.</i>
Gen. iv. 17, 18.	Gen. v. 3—31.
Adam, Cain.	Adam, Seth.
Enoch.	Enos.
Irad.	Cainan.
Mehujael.	Mahalaleel.
Methusael.	Jared.
Lamech.	Enoch.
	Methuselah.
	Lamech.

It is strange that though one list traces through

Cain and the other through Seth yet they both come finally to Lamech. The similarity of names, often identical, sometimes thinly disguised, compels us to regard the two as recensions of one and the same original list. Prof. Ryle, Bishop of Winchester, says: "Perhaps we should not be far wrong in regarding them as constituting a group of demi-gods or heroes, whose names, in the earliest days of Hebrew tradition, filled up the blank between the creation of man and the period of Abraham. Such a group would be in accordance with the analogy of the primitive legends of other races. But, instead of presenting them as demi-gods, the narrator removes every taint of polytheistic superstition, and just presents these names as the names of ordinary human beings."

As with the enormous size and strength of the earliest inhabitants of the world, so it is with their phenomenal ages. It is still a common popular belief that men lived to a very great age then. Thus the Greek poet Hesiod asserts that in the silver age *childhood* lasted, 130 years. A Hebrew prophet (Is. lxx. 20) sketching the Messianic picture in colours drawn from popular ideas respecting the far-distant past of the golden age, predicts that "the *child* shall die an hundred years old." In ancient history there are everywhere instances quoted of heroes who attained the age of several hundred years, but they are purely mythical. In actual history the following ages have been placed on record: 137; 145; 152; 154; 172; 185; but they are undoubtedly

greatly exaggerated. The people mentioned all lived at a time when registers were not kept, and we have to depend entirely on popular memory, which is very fallacious and apt to exaggerate. Even were these ages correct, there is a huge gulf between 150 and 900, the age often given to the patriarchs before the flood.

These phenomenal ages are only quoted in the Priestly Code writings. A casual glance at Gen. iv. (J) and Gen. v. (P) will show that the Jehovah writer, if he gives anything beyond the patriarch's bare name, connects it with some curious and interesting fact. Thus he tells us that, of Lamech's sons, Jabel was the father of shepherds; Jubal, of musicians; and Tubal Cain, of smiths. Gen. v. (P), on the other hand, gives their ages pure and simple; the age at which each patriarch begat his first-born, and the age at which he dies. P revels in exact numbers, names and precise details, which have all the air of authentic facts, and are utterly inconsistent, often, with the laws of possibility. Prof. Ryle's explanation is clearly right. The periods between the Creation and Flood, and between the Flood and Abraham, needed to be filled up. Sorely against the real character of this pre-historic age, the Priestly Code writer forces it into a regular historical and chronological system, and, with a spurious air of learned research in the most unsuitable places, carries the genealogy through without a break from Adam to Abraham. The names were supplied him, as the Bishop of

Winchester shows, by tradition, and he divided the traditional thousands of years between the creation and the flood among these patriarchs respectively. He has so dressed up these naive traditions into a learned history that Archbishop Usher and others, in an uncritical age, naturally regarded the precise detailed ages of these patriarchs as literally true, and on the strength of them drew up a scheme of Bible chronology tracing back the Creation to the exact year 4004 B.C. Usher's dates were inserted by some unknown authority in the margins of our Authorized Version, and there is the date 4004 B.C. printed to this day in the margin of the first chapter of Genesis.

CHAPTER VII.

SPIRITUAL TEACHING OF GENESIS.

THE preceding chapter may seem to suggest the inference that the early chapters of Genesis are a mere tissue of myths, legends and folk-lore, and therefore utterly untrustworthy. No conclusion could possibly be further from the actual facts. It has been necessary to quote in all their bare nakedness the results achieved and accepted by modern scholars: and the higher criticism may seem to shake the very foundations of our faith by its rude handling of Bible history; but it does nothing of the kind. The real value of Genesis does not vanish because it is shown that its Creation and Flood stories have a common basis with Babylonian and other primitive kindred legends. The inspiration or worth of the Eden and Fall stories is not impaired by calling them parables. Historically and spiritually the early chapters of our Bible have a far deeper and stronger hold on us than this would imply.

If there is any truth in the modern view, quoted in our first chapter, that religion itself is an evolution; that we cannot nowadays afford to ignore all religions outside the Bible as so many forms of error, but are bound to recognize even the rudest beliefs as

stepping-stones to Christianity; then, surely, here we have the key to the whole problem. Historically, these primitive Genesis legends are of the very first importance. They are connecting links between primitive religion and the more advanced Hebrew conception of the one true God. Israel's religion, like every other, has its roots in the remote past: has itself been fostered by earlier faiths; has taken up and assimilated their better and still living elements, and we cannot possibly spare such records of older creeds as Genesis contains.

These survivals, wrecks of older beliefs, are invaluable to the student of religion as showing man's primitive way of seeking after God, and God's way of revealing Himself to man in those earlier stages of religious evolution. In these fossil creeds of a bygone age we see God speaking to man, as He always speaks to him, in the language of his day and generation, the only speech he can understand.

We are too apt to forget that these earlier minds did not think as we think. Their stock of ideas is very scanty, their experience extremely limited, their power of weighing evidence non-existent. Abstract thought and reasoning, historical accuracy to facts, are qualities altogether foreign to their elementary stage of intelligence. They are as easily satisfied with an explanation of things around them as they are eager to possess an explanation. Be their question what it may,—the origin of man, disease, or death,—they have a reply ready to all these

questions, and *that reply is always found in the shape of a story*. This instinct is not peculiar to primitive man ; the love of illustrative stories is alive in us now and appeals to all races, civilized and uncivilized, the whole world over,—especially do Hebrews and all Orientals revel in word-pictures, imagery, stories. So these early Bible narratives with their explanations of the origin of the world, and God as its one divine source ; death, as the wages of sin : the flood, a proof of God's hatred of wickedness and sin as unworthy of men made in His own likeness,—one and all spoke very plainly to primitive man in the world's infancy, and speak equally clearly to us now.

And herein lies the main value of these Genesis stories. If it be true that much of Genesis is not historic fact, but mere parable, what does this matter ? If the story of the Fall be only a parable, does this rob it of its value to the human heart and soul ? To discuss its literal historic accuracy is as out of place as to seek to discover who was "the sower who went forth to sow" ; or "the Prodigal Son" ; or "the Samaritan who went down to Jericho." In our Lord's story, even if no member of the despised Samaritan race ever followed in the steps of a hypocritical priest or thoughtless Levite along the rocky road to Jericho, and succoured a needy fellow-man, the vital truth and teaching abides in the story all the same. So it is exactly with the story of the Fall.

What is this story of the Fall? God places our first parents in a garden, and tells them: "Of the fruit of every tree in the garden ye may freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, ye shall not eat of it: for in the day that ye eat thereof ye shall surely die." For a time they obey, till one day a subtle serpent says to the woman: "Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" The woman replies that they may freely eat of all except one, of that one they may not eat, or they will surely die. The serpent answers: "Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened: and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit and did eat: and gave also to her husband, and he did eat. And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of God, amongst the trees of the garden."

This is clearly a parable. No unprejudiced mind can pretend to doubt that if in any other book but the Bible he met with trees of life and knowledge, and talking serpents, and God walking in a garden in the cool of the day, he would want no other proofs that it was an allegory, a parable he was reading,

and intended to be understood as such. Is it any the less God's own revelation because in it He is speaking to these early generations in the only language which they can understand? Is its palpable meaning any the less clear to us now? Could God have more vividly portrayed the way in which sin comes to the individual soul even now in the year 1908 A.D.? First the faint suggestion to evil, as of some outer voice saying "eat, and ye shall be as gods," exaggerating the pleasure and gain to be won by yielding to the alluring temptation. Next, an uneasy feeling, again as of a voice, but a voice within us now, whispering "but God hath said, thou shalt not." Then we take the next step, fraught with danger; we dally with the tempter, linger near the forbidden tree, weakly shut our eyes to the consequences, till slowly, unconsciously, the restraints of conscience vanish, the promptings of appetite increase, and in a hasty moment we snatch at the forbidden fruit, and eat thereof, and "our eyes are opened, and we know that we are naked," and we wish to hide ourselves from the presence of God.

It is the most sublime picture of the origin of sin, the most masterly and clear analysis of its small beginning and rapid growth that ever was conceived: yet this story of the Fall is only a parable. We know it is not literally true: it is not a historical account of exact facts as they actually did happen. Again we ask: "What does this matter?" Not until we cease to focus our gaze on the letter, and

fix it steadily on the spirit, shall we discern clearly the great spiritual messages of these early narratives. If the Holy Spirit of God inspires the writers of Genesis to unearth the gems that lie hidden in the Babylonian legends of the Creation and Flood, and guides them so to remould these stories as to make them true vehicles of great moral and spiritual truths, —what does it matter if these legends originally belonged to pagans living in Babylonia or anywhere else? When we speak lightly of the Babylonian or savage origin of this Bible story or that, we are not as wise as we wish to appear. A faculty of wise and judicious selection, such as is displayed in these Genesis stories when placed side by side with their Babylonian originals, manifests a high and rare gift, a spiritual genius of the first order, and nothing short of Divine inspiration can satisfactorily account for it.

All said and done, questions of the relative date of Genesis and Deuteronomy, or the scientific value of the Creation account, or the historical accuracy of the Flood, or the Babylonian origin of the Sabbath or of Sheol, may be deeply interesting to the historian, but the real value of these Bible passages lies ever so much deeper than this. We shall miss the whole scope and purpose of the Old Testament early history, if we do not at the very outset grasp the great fact that it is written with a moral and religious rather than a historical aim. Its spiritual value alone matters, and this will ever remain the

same, it cannot be shaken. The knowledge our soul is athirst for is a knowledge of our own true and intimate relationship to God our loving Father, a knowledge of the duties and privileges involved in this relationship, a knowledge of our own ability to realize both the one and the other. This is the only knowledge which gives to life all its dignity and power for good; and, so long as Genesis impresses upon our hearts these great spiritual truths as it abundantly does, to guide us in our perplexity, comfort us in our sorrow, and lead us daily nearer to God, what matter questions of dates, authorship or scientific accuracy? Truth is independent of these minor details. Truth of idea has its place in education as well as truth of fact. God can teach and lead us just as well by parable as by history.

2

But - find life

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HISTORICAL VALUE OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC, JACOB.

HOW far can we accept the portion of the Genesis narrative dealing with the biographies of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph as literal and accurate history? Are they individuals or tribes? It may shock us to hear it thus bluntly suggested that these hallowed names with which we have so long been familiar may possibly belong to a world of shadows, but this is not what the critics mean. The denial of the existence of these old heroes and worthies no scientific student of the Bible would venture upon nowadays. The views of the modern critical school briefly amount to this: "We cannot possibly decide now exactly how much of these early narratives is accurate history. The prophetic genius of the nation shaped popular traditions into vehicles of moral and spiritual truth. Abraham, Jacob, Esau, Joseph are life-like portraits. Does it make any real difference to us if some features in the portraiture are tribal or national, rather than strictly individual? If, in fact, there is some element of idealization in the narrative? Truth of idea has its place in education as well as truth of fact. Must

ideal and historical truth always coincide? Is ideal truth worthless if it is not historical?" (Dean of Ely, Church Congress, 1907).

The narrative of these patriarchs stands midway between the Flood and Moses, and so comes nearer to the historical border-line, but it is pre-historic still and must, therefore, be read and interpreted with considerable caution. It has long been felt, that this portion of Genesis blends together tribal and personal stories: incidents which belong to the experience of the tribe are narrated as though they formed part of the life of an individual. The writers of Genesis found a number of traditions, legends and stories current in their day and intimately associated with the hallowed names of certain great national heroes. Some of these traditions were authentic and of very ancient date, others were floating stories handed down from mouth to mouth, and treasured by the Hebrew race. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were as real to Israel as William the Conqueror or Alfred to us, and it was felt that their biographies should be embodied in the national history which they themselves had been so instrumental in shaping. But this was not done till about the year 1000 B.C., at the earliest, that is to say, some two thousand years at least after the events recorded. Thus it comes about that the writers of the biographies of these patriarchs have idealized these old national heroes, the pivot characters of the Old Testament, and patriotically attributed to them a great deal

more than was really theirs. Throwing back into this far-off age the moral and religious ideas of their own day, the writers have associated with the patriarchs thoughts and words, ideas and conceptions of God which these worthies never could have conceived ; making them think, talk and act as saintly Jews of the year 900 B.C. might have done, certainly not primitive men living two thousand years earlier.

This does not rob these patriarchal biographies of their real value, and their real value is the spiritual one. As with the stories of the Creation and the Fall, so it is here. "The Creation of the world by God, and the creation of man in the image of God, form the charter of humanity, but the essential truth in the story of the Creation and the Fall is independent of the form of the narrative. The essence of the story is not in its drapery." So with the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, "under the charm of these attractive personalities, and their stirring experiences and achievements, so dramatically presented that they command breathless attention, these early biographies unconsciously, and, therefore, all the more effectively, instil into our minds the most essential truths concerning God, and life, and duty" (Dean of Ely, *ut supra*).

The great supporter of the view that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are only tribal names is Ewald. His idea is that just as Romulus in Roman mythology is invented as the father of the Romans, and, in Greek legend, Hellen, as the father of the

Hellenes or Greeks,—so Abram of Ur of the Chaldees, and Jacob, surnamed Israel, are mere fictitious persons to explain the tribe-names “Hebrews” and “Israelites.” He maintains that the personality of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is only dramatically conceived to represent three successive waves of migration of Semitic tribes into Canaan from their common home between the Tigris and Euphrates. Abram and Lot, according to Ewald, are represented as uncle and nephew to account for the patent fact that their descendants,—the Hebrews, Ammonites and Moabites,—are kindred nations of the same common stock. In the writers’ day, however, the Hebrews hated and despised the Ammonites and Moabites, their kindred and foes; so the Genesis editors adopt a favourite Arab device of discrediting an opponent’s ancestry, and make out that the fathers of these kindred races were begotten of incest by Lot with his two daughters (Gen. xix.). In Esau, or Edom (Gen. xxv. 30), Ewald sees another imaginary name dramatically coined to account for the Edomites; and Jacob and Esau are both represented as sons of Isaac to indicate the close kinship between the Israelites and the Edomites (“he is thy brother,” Numb. xx. 14, Deut. xxiii. 7). The whole story of the quarrels between Jacob and Esau, Isaac’s two sons, becomes a graphic picturesque representation of the way in which Israel (Jacob), the tent-dwelling tribe, already a cultured nomadic people, supplants Edom (Esau)

the hunting tribe, or Arab proper, adroitly managing to oust these Bedouin hunters and drive them back almost to the desert. Up to the last, however, Israel recognized the close relationship existing between themselves and the Edomites: "An Ammonite or Moabite, bastards, shall not enter into the congregation of Israel. Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever. Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite, for he is thy brother" (Deut. xxiii.).

Ewald here makes out a strong case, and even Prof. Driver, who rejects this view, has to own that there is much to be said in its favour, for in Genesis it is often extremely difficult to decide whether the name of an individual is not really the name of a tribe. Among many instances quoted by Prof. Driver we may mention the following: (a) In Gen. x., in several cases, nations are clearly represented as individuals. (b) In Gen. ix. Canaan, Japheth, Shem are manifestly three groups of nations and not individuals at all, while Esau and Ishmael later on are palpably patronymics. (c) Machir in Gen. l. 23 is put down as a person, but in Numb. xxvi. 29 Machir begets (the country) Gilead, while in Judges xi. 1 Gilead begets Jephthah!

There is, therefore, strong *prima facie* evidence for Ewald's theory, and his suggestion becomes all the more plausible when we look at this early Genesis history from the writers' standpoint. They found in their day, two thousand years or so later, a number

of existing kindred races with much in common, and speaking kindred dialects: they also found certain old customs and institutions in existence handed down from the remote past, and their record is an attempt at the solution of these problems. In course of time, various traditions and stories had sprung up which offered a partial explanation of this kinship and these old institutions, and the writers added not a few surmises of their own. It was asked, for example, "Why is it that the Canaanites, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Ishmaelites, our kindred, races often older than our own, are our political inferiors? Why are we 'blessed' while they are 'accursed'?" The natural answer, in Israel's eyes, was that this present prosperity or adversity was the outcome of "blessings and cursings" in the remote past. Thus we get the story that Noah once "drank of the wine of his vineyard, and was drunken," and Ham, the father of Canaan, behaved badly towards his father, while Shem and Japheth behaved very well. "And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him, and he said: Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant" (Gen. ix. 20, 29). This was the way in which the writers of Genesis solved the problem of the Canaanites' downfall, and their subjection to their kinsmen the Israelites.

In the same way we have already seen that they accounted for the inferiority of the Moabites and Ammonites by saying that they were born of incest. As for their own distinctive name, Israel, and the names of their twelve tribes, this was explained by giving Jacob another name, Israel, and making him the father of twelve sons. The almost total political extinction of two of the tribes of Israel—Levi and Simeon,—was also accounted for by a story which told how Jacob, their father, had cursed Simeon and Levi for killing a man in a fit of unbridled fury (Gen. xlix. 5, 8).

This view is not a mere baseless assumption. It is the invariable practice of men in an uncritical age to invent and tell a story to account for the conditions of things around them. In Genesis itself, and all through the early Bible books, the evidence in support of this assertion is overpowering in amount. To quote a few instances:—

The Israelites of the tenth century had to give themselves some reason why Bethel, with its big stone or monolith, was so sacred, and there was the tradition of Jacob's angel-ladder vision there to account for it. As a matter of fact, it was a time-hallowed sacred "house of God" long before the Hebrews entered Canaan.

So, again, they found a large circle of twelve stones (like our Druidic circles) near Jordan, and immediately accounted for it with the explanation that Joshua, on crossing Jordan, made the heads of the

twelve tribes "take up every man a stone" from the river-bed and set it on dry land, as a memorial for ever of their miraculous crossing of Jordan dry-shod. A palpable attempt to give a Jehovah character to a very ancient heathen sacred stone-circle.

Or they had to explain the origin of the Hebrew custom of not eating of a particular sinew, and they found an answer in the story of Jacob wrestling with the Angel. "The Angel touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh, and he halted upon his thigh; therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, *unto this day*" (Gen. xxxii.).

In precisely the same manner, stories without number had in course of time been invented to account for the names of places. Nowhere does fancy run riot more wildly than with proper names. The name itself has become dimmed or changed with time, its original meaning is clean forgotten, but on the face of it the word suggests a meaning which strikes people's fancy, and it is adopted. Thus "Moses" is the Egyptian *mcs* or *mesu*, "son, child," but it looks so like *mo*, "water," and *ushe*, "saved," that the Hebrews at once translated it "saved from the waters," and invented the whole legend of his exposure on the waters of the Nile to account for it^a.

Similarly, the Bible stories given in connection with such places as *Mahanaim* (Heb. "two camps,"

^a Vide pp. 61—62 sup.

or "meeting place of two hosts") in Gen. xxxii. 10; *Penuel*, "the face of God," in Gen. xxxii. 30; *Succoth*, "and there Jacob made *booths* for his cattle, wherefore the place is called Succoth unto this day"; *Allon-bachuth*, "the oak of weeping," because Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, was buried there; *Abel-mizraim*, "place of weeping"; "and Joseph made a sore weeping over Jacob, wherefore the place was called Abel-mizraim":—these stories, one and all, are merely imagination. The picturesque derivations of the place-names suggested the story, and traditional events floating in the popular memory were worked up to suit the apparent meanings of these places, and associated with these localities.

We have entered into all these details to show the large part played in Genesis by tradition and popular imagination: how very much of it is based on folklore, picturesque derivations of names and places, stories accumulating for untold ages round national heroes, and the efforts of a later age to explain old customs and institutions, the real origin of which had been forgotten. There is a layer of historical fact undoubtedly underlying it all, but it is mainly idealized history.

So it is that the question with which we started: "Are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph names of tribes or real individuals?" is not so easy to answer off hand as may appear at first sight.

Prof. Driver's view seems to be nearest the truth. He maintains that the abundance of tradition gather-

ing round the names of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob from the very earliest times : the strong hold which their names and personality secured on the Hebrew mind, even in the remote past, make it absolutely impossible to eliminate these heroes from the actual history of Israel. They were undoubtedly real living persons, strong characters who stamped their marked personality indelibly on their own and succeeding generations, and largely helped to mould the history of their nation. He, however, fully believes that in their Bible portraits in Genesis their characters are idealized. They are dramatically worked up into ideal types of perfect men of God. They are set before us, as models for after ages to copy, by writers who were men penetrated by definite religious and moral ideas ; writers who saw God in life and history and wrote with a distinctly religious aim in view. Tradition supplied them with an outline for their sketches of the patriarchs, and they filled in this historical outline with details and perfections of their own, so as to present Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph,—the great historical figures of antiquity—as spiritually perfect types. They also invested them with the characteristics which afterwards strongly marked the tribes descended from them, the chosen people of Israel ^b.

^b Dean Stanley, even in uncritical days, pointed out the striking likeness between Jacob and the Jews sprung from him. By Jacob's discipline of exile and suffering, a true counterpart is produced of the special faults and special gifts known to us chiefly through his

Dr. Ryle, Bishop of Winchester, endorses this view: "The evidence at our disposal does not at present justify us in claiming more than that the general outline of the narrative is historical, and that the Mosaic epoch presupposes the patriarchal age. The fact is that the great figures of the patriarchal age are presented to us in narratives of which it is simply impossible for us, at this time of day, to establish the accuracy. We cannot now distinguish precisely the historical nucleus from the idealized picture. We can only conclude that knowledge of the precise details of the history is not of vital importance."

persecuted descendants in the Middle Ages. In Jacob we see the same timid, cautious watchfulness that we know so well, though under darker colours, in Shylock of Venice and Isaac of York. But no less, in the nobler side of his career, do we have the germs of the unbroken endurance, the undying resolution which keeps the nation alive still, even in its present outcast condition: and which was the basis, in its brighter days, of the heroic zeal, long-suffering, and hope of Moses, of David, of Jeremiah, of the Maccabees, of the first martyr Stephen."

CHAPTER IX.

MOSES.

WHATEVER our conclusions about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph may be, there can be no shadow of a doubt about the great national hero, Moses. He is a real personality of the very first importance, and we shall find that all sources, ancient and modern, are agreed about a great portion of his life and work : though here as elsewhere there is also much that is shrouded in myth. We can no more eliminate Moses from actual history than we can Julius Cæsar or Napoleon.

Moses was a maker of history as only some half-a-dozen men in the world have been, and probably influenced the civilization and advancement of mankind as much as any man.

Some two thousand years before our era a large group of Hebrews migrated from Southern Palestine to occupy the not-distant pasture lands of Egypt (Goshen), where they continued their old calling of shepherds. They long lived there as an almost separate people, though under Egyptian rule, till, after a time, these foreign guests were subjected to harsher treatment. Forced labour was exacted from them for the construction of new public works in Goshen. This the Hebrews resented as an assault

on their honour and freedom, but they had no remedy till one of their number, Moses, came forward as their champion, urging them to regard self-assertion against Egyptian oppression as an article of their religion. At a time when plague was ravaging Egypt, the Hebrews secretly broke up their settlement one night in spring and escaped into the wilderness.

Moses thus left Egypt with a very mixed rabble of followers, and it was only by the force of his own strong character and genius for statesmanship that he welded this heterogeneous mass into a nation in forty years. He was the life and soul of the whole movement; he undertook the responsibilities of the leadership of a number of kindred, but more or less independent, tribes; and it was no easy task. Israel often had its evil moods in which it strove to shake itself free from the control and iron hand of Moses: there were times when even he despaired of accomplishing the work he had deliberately taken in hand. The confidence of success which he almost invariably manifested was justified by the result. The merit, however, was not altogether his: his design was aided in a wholly unlooked-for way by a series of marvellous occurrences quite beyond his control. There can be no doubt that the Hebrews escaped from the pursuing Egyptians at the Red Sea in a wondrous manner. Whether a high wind during the night had left the shallow sea so low that it became possible to ford it, or be the explanation

what it may, the antiquity of the Song of Triumph at the Red Sea and universal Hebrew tradition clearly show that Israel had a wondrous escape from a most critical situation. This was not a solitary experience in Israel's history in the wilderness. The Hebrews became firmly convinced that behind Moses stood One higher than he, therefore it was that wind and sea obeyed him and gave him their aid. What was done by the deliberate purpose of Moses, and what was done without human contrivance came to be regarded alike as the work of Jehovah and Moses working together for the good of Israel.

This feeling Moses was the first to foster, not for his own personal aggrandizement,—he is unanimously described as “meek,”—but for the welfare of the nation. He was bent on quelling the natural Semitic clannishness of the various tribes and welding them into a united nation: he was still more determined to awaken the Hebrews to a keen sense of their absolute dependence on Jehovah. By his own personal example, and under the inspiration of God, he redeemed Israel from a state of semi-heathenism. He so thoroughly steeped and imbued the minds and hearts of the Hebrews with the firm conviction that Jehovah had chosen them as His one people,—“He was *their* God, and they *His* people,”—that this fixed idea took firm root in their souls and gradually revolutionized the whole Jewish character, as all true ideals must and will. Neither Moses nor his people

had as yet the slightest conception of God as the moral Governor of the whole world ; that idea would to them have been "a stone and no bread." It would not have appealed to them in the least, neither would they have understood it. "Hear, O Israel, Jehovah is *thy* God ;" this they could and did grasp, for it meant that the God whose dwelling-place was Mount Sinai was as much theirs and theirs alone as was their own Moses. Their Jehovah it was who had delivered them from Egypt, saved them at the Red Sea, by His own mouth given them His Commandments and made a solemn covenant with them at Sinai, fed them with manna from heaven and water from the rock in the wilderness. He could champion, guide, provide for them from Egypt to Palestine, so He was not to them the God of a country, as other nations had their gods, but the God of His own chosen people Israel. Where they went, He went: their friends were His friends: their foes His foes. Their camp was His sanctuary, His ark was Himself, so He was never away from them for a single moment.

It was Moses in the wilderness who welded the mixed rabble of his followers ; it was he who awakened a feeling of oneness and solidarity among tribes naturally independent and apt to fly asunder ; and he did it all on the basis of a faith in a Jehovah who was their God, and they His very own people. All this was accomplished during the sojourn in Kadesh. Their stay in the wilderness was in all

probability not a forced stay^a. As shepherds, inured to a desert life, it satisfied their immediate needs till they could see their way to seize and settle in a more fertile country. Here it was that Moses laid the foundations of Israel's prosperity. The Israelites often got out of hand, but, supported by God, Moses persevered though often sorely tried, and by his own inspiring influence and example, by persuasion or chastisement, kept them more or less loyal and true. What Israel became in after times, politically in the days of David and Solomon, spiritually in the days of Isaiah, was mainly due to him. It was then that Israel first realized its national personality, and this was due to the creative genius of Moses. In later times the Hebrews also held that they were his debtors for their whole treasure of religious life and faith; and rightly so, for he it was who sowed the seed which afterwards found its ripe fruit in the sublime spiritual teaching of the prophets, nay, in Christianity itself.

In all their after history the Israelites look back to Sinai as the one great epoch-making crisis in their life as a nation, and modern historians own that "the germ of all Israel's moral and spiritual after-development took place at Sinai" (Prof. Budde). What was it that happened then? We have already given a part of the answer.

^a These 40 years would allow a miserable race of craven serfs to die out and a new generation of genuine spirited children of the desert to arise, fit and ready to conquer Canaan; so the Kadesh sojourn was not purposeless.

(A.) There Moses welded the Hebrew tribes together as a compact nation, animated by the one idea that Jehovah was their God, guide and champion. Henceforth they were fully convinced that on Mount Sinai Jehovah had revealed Himself face to face to Moses and there plainly told him that, out of pity for them in their bondage, He had delivered Israel out of Egypt, and chosen them as His one favoured nation : that He had a great future in store for them, and would be their protector and champion, if only they on their side were loyal to Him.

That God revealed Himself to Moses at Sinai we firmly believe. We do not believe that He appeared to Moses and talked with him face to face for forty days, but manifested Himself to him in a dream, vision, or by a vivid inspiration, as He spoke to the prophets in later days. The dramatic form in which the whole scene is set in Exod. xix. and xxxiv. is clearly due to the Hexateuch writers' imagination. In a graphic word-picture we see how Jehovah with His own mouth thundered forth the Ten Commandments, and afterwards for forty days was alone face to face with Moses on the mountain ; so close to him that some of the radiance and glory of His presence was reflected on Moses' face and he had to put on a veil. It is the poetic expression of a desire so to represent the scene as to leave a lasting impression on the reader's mind. It is also possible that the giving of the Law and the Covenant is for the same reason represented as having taken place

in a day when in reality it was the work of months and years.

Be this as it may, even those who do not accept the direct revelation of Jehovah to Moses at all, but account for all that happened then on purely natural grounds, agree that at Sinai, after Israel's deliverance from bondage, some solemn, memorable, epoch-making occurrence took place which left its indelible impression on Israel. What was this momentous event the memory of which was never forgotten or allowed to grow dim, but is constantly the subject of allusion by prophet and Psalmist alike?

(B.) It was there and then that Moses, as the mediator between Jehovah and Israel, made the foundation of his great nation-building scheme doubly sure by solemnly binding the people to be loyal to God in a most impressive religious ceremony, and in such a realistic way as to fill them with lasting awe. The occasion was a most solemn one. Moses had to deal with a rude, primitive but intensely superstitious people. The success or failure of his life-work as their leader, their own existence or annihilation as a nation depended, so Moses felt, on Israel's loyalty or disloyalty to the Covenant which he was going to make them solemnly swear before God to abide by. Moses knew his people, and he is determined to fill their minds with a deep sense of awe. He ratified a solemn league and covenant between Jehovah and Israel with all such solemn and awful rites as would appeal to a primitive superstitious people's imagination. Moses

first openly proclaimed to the assembled people all that Jehovah had revealed to him: His intention to set apart Israel as His chosen nation on one condition, that they clung to Him and obeyed His commandments.

Then Moses made the Israelites publicly and solemnly pledge themselves by a solemn covenant, under the most terrible penalties if they broke their pledged word, to abide by this contract between God and themselves. To make the compact still more binding, Moses ratified it by an imposingly solemn sacrifice, accompanied by a ceremony that would deeply impress this primitive people. "They sacrificed oxen unto the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; *and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.* And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: *and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.* And Moses took the blood, *and sprinkled it on the people,* and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." (Exod. xxiv. 6—9.)

We modern readers can form no idea of the way in which this simple act of blood-sprinkling would strike the hearts of these people with awe. By this formal sprinkling of the blood on God's altar and on themselves, they knew that they were subjecting themselves with all due solemnity to a terrible oath, and invoking upon themselves the most awful curse if they did not honestly and truly keep their part

of the contract. They were deliberately calling down a terrible doom if they proved unfaithful to their oath. If they henceforth broke their part of the covenant they would be under God's ban, accursed, plagued and everlastingly afflicted ; while if they kept their agreement with Jehovah their days would be long and prosperous in the land, for Jehovah and they would carry all before them.

Never in all their after-history did Israel forget this terribly impressive ceremony. It filled their hearts with awe, but also with a national pride and faith in themselves under Jehovah their own God and champion.

(C.) A third work that Moses undoubtedly achieved was to lay the foundation of the religious and civil laws of Israel ; though not nearly to the extent that either Deuteronomy or the Priestly Code would lead us to infer.

Some form of the Ten Commandments may be, and probably is due to Moses, but certainly not in the shape in which we have them now. They are said to have been written on two tables, and it is hardly likely that one would have contained our present five commandments with their 146 words, while the other only had 26. It is more probable that the first five commandments were originally very brief, like the rest. It is strange that although God says in *Exod. xxxiv.* : "Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first : and I will write upon these tables the words that were upon the first tables, which thou brakest," the two summaries are of a widely different

character. Several modern scholars raise a strong objection to the Mosaic origin of the second Commandment on the plea that the prohibition of images was quite unknown down to the prophetic age. Indeed, as late as Hezekiah's day the brazen serpent made by Moses himself was worshipped as an image of Jehovah. It is also pointed out that the religious tone of the Decalogue is far and away above anything conceived of in Moses' day, and resembles far more closely the spiritual conception of a universal God such as we find Him in the prophets.

The general view now adopted is that "the Ten Commandments originally existed in a much briefer form, to which from time to time various reflexions and promises were added which strengthened their appeal to the mind and will. Commandments 2, 3, 4, 5 originally wanted the reasons annexed, while 10 may have stopped at 'house.' This terser version gives a better balance to the two Tables, was more suited to the capacity of the popular memory, and it harmonizes the two passages which contain them" (Exod. xx. and Deut. v.). (Paterson.)

In any case, whoever may be their inspired author, the Ten Commandments are a kind of Magna Charta of immense value. It is impossible to exaggerate the moral and spiritual importance of the Decalogue to Israel, and through Israel to the world at large.

It is hardly necessary to add that none of the sacrificial rites and ceremonies, nor the institution of priests, nor any of the minute details of the Priestly Code can possibly be attributed to Moses.

CHAPTER X.

RELIGIOUS AND MORAL STATE OF SOCIETY AT THE TIME OF THE HEXATEUCH.

THE Hexateuch, as we have seen, is not contemporary history, nor in any sense strictly historical at all. It is a grand picture of the customs, institutions, ideas prevalent in the writer's own day, but an imperfect record of the actual period portrayed. As already stated, it represents the efforts of men of a far later date to reconstruct a remote past: men of little critical power who throw back into this far-away age the condition of things as they found it in their own day. More than this, they write with a moral and religious rather than a historical aim: their purpose was to enforce great truths, not to present an exact record of events. Like the preachers or moral teachers of to-day, the first question they asked about a popular story was not "Is it absolutely or scientifically true?" but, "Does it illustrate the vital point to be impressed?"

If we are asked, "What, then, was the actual moral and religious state of society in the days of the Hexateuch?" our answer, if we are candid, must be that we do not know: we can only conjecture.

All our conclusions on this point are merely probabilities. We must also remember that interesting as these deductions may be to historical and religious students from an archæological point of view, they have little or no direct bearing on the spiritual teaching of the Bible.

Modern scholars have made serious and painstaking efforts to reconstruct this prehistoric Hebrew period, and, at first sight, their methods appear thoroughly rational and scientific. They base their inferences on the self-evident truth that the great law of evolution holds good everywhere. In every department of human progress,—knowledge, religion, society,—higher forms have gradually, imperceptibly arisen out of the lower. They therefore maintain that the history, religion and civilization of the Jews in historic days is the adult product of a condition of things to be found in their infancy in the prehistoric period we are considering. If, then, we wish to reconstitute this earlier culture of Israel in the days of Genesis, we must proceed on the same lines which have led to such good results elsewhere. We must do for prehistoric history what has been done by science in other fields of knowledge, unearth the “fossil-remains” which lie buried below the surface and make our deductions from them, with the additional assistance of clues from similar primitive strata.

In other words, their plea is that the Genesis ancestors of the Hebrews, in their habits and mental development, were precisely on the same level as

other primitive races, and especially modern Bedouin Arabs, and that we may safely draw our inferences accordingly. Not only so, but it is a well-known fact that just as our witches' sabbath, Christmas-trees, Easter-eggs, yule-logs, and a hundred similar survivals in civilized Christian England have their shrivelled roots in the soil of an extinct British paganism, similarly every nation, even in its most civilized days, bears witness to its earlier barbaric times. Man is essentially conservative; by force of long custom he ever retains vestiges of the old beliefs, institutions, ideas of his earlier stages of development. In these "fossil-remains" we find all the evidence we need so as to show the early low levels through which he has passed. These scholars therefore maintain that, if we wish to reconstruct the Genesis period, all we have to do is to carefully examine and dissect the old customs and traditions referred to in the early Bible books, or found scattered throughout Bible pages, and trace them back, wherever possible, to their original source. This clue, together with a careful comparison with similar customs and traditions among Semitic and other primitive races, will furnish us with a surprising amount of information not only about Genesis, but respecting many institutions in Israel which are strange, and which Israel itself no longer understood.

In a sense this view is quite sound, but in many other respects it is essentially unsafe. Kept within its proper limits this method of historical and com-

parative deduction has led to excellent results. It is true that all the world over there exists this conservative instinct which prompts men to retain traces of old beliefs even when newer and better religious conceptions are firmly established. This is the case especially in religious rites and ceremonies. Thus the modern Hindu, while using matches for lighting ordinary fires, still retains the primitive "fire-drill" for obtaining fire, rubbing pieces of wood together when he requires *pure* fire for sacrificial purposes. More often still, we have old religious customs surviving and their retention justified by giving them some new interpretation which renders them tolerable to the new religion by conforming with it. It is more than probable, for example, that the practice of turning to the East in the Creed, burying our dead facing eastward, and the orientation of our churches all point to an age when we were sun-worshippers. We have forgotten this and explain the custom on purely Christian grounds. In a precisely similar way, circumcision in the East dates back to the remotest pagan past. It was a mark of a boy's reaching puberty, also an act of consecration to a tribal god. The theological explanation of its origin given in Gen. xvii. 10, as a purely Hebrew sign of a covenant between God and Abraham, is a Jewish addition so as to make the practice conform with Israel's later religious views.

In cases like these we welcome such evidence as

valuable and helpful, but often the advocates of the comparative method carry their inferences a great deal too far, and draw conclusions which their premises do not justify.

Constantly we shall find them, on the strength of indirect references in the Bible pages and from the analogy of Semitic and other religions, crediting the Hebrews of these earlier days with the grossest heathen superstitions such as nature-worship and a universal belief in magic. We have no more right to saddle the religion of Israel at any given period with the heathen practices into which the people occasionally relapsed than we are justified in holding Christianity responsible for all the belief in witchcraft and spiritualism which still continues to prevail in Christian lands. Side by side with every true religion there is always a lower and popular layer of superstition which nothing will ever eradicate, so long as man continues to be the creature of curiosity and credulity, that is, as long as human nature lasts.

It is gravely asserted, for instance, that the Hebrews of Genesis days were spirit-worshippers. We do know for a fact that the other Semitic nations peopled their world with spirits. Trees, stones, wells were in their eyes the abodes of spirits, and worshipped accordingly. In the Old Testament we also find an immense number of stones, trees, and springs associated, in patriarchal days, with sacred rites. We may mention Jacob's stone at Bethel, the

stone-circle near Jordan ; Abraham's oak at Mamre, Abraham's tamarisk at Beersheba, Deborah's palm-tree, the sacred terebinth at Ophrah ; the wells at Beersheba, Kadesh, Laharoi, and the fuller's spring. On the bare evidence of the fact that both Canaanites and Babylonians worshipped such sacred stones, trees and springs as spirit-abodes, it is seriously suggested that Abraham, Jacob, Deborah did so too. We are not in a position, at this time of day, to say that they did or that they did not : but everything points to the view that, long before Moses, Israel already had some conception of one God. The teaching of Moses himself presupposes and appeals to a religious past in which the light of God's revelation had already dawned. The idea of one God was not the sudden creation of Moses' day. His work was only to widen and perpetuate the breach with heathenism, and, long before that, Israel had probably advanced far beyond the "spirit" stage.

All that these sacred stones, trees and wells prove is that, on their arrival in Canaan, the Hebrews found these natural objects hallowed by the natives as spirit-abodes, "houses of god." They themselves, therefore, also regarded them as holy, even though they probably had already risen above the idea of "spirit-gods." To primitive minds, like the patriarchs, the difficulty of realizing a deity apart from a local abode, or some object in which he could dwell, would be very great. It was natural to them to localize a god in some grove, or fountain of living water, or

some spot connected with a great event or crisis. If there was not some natural object near at hand, a big stone or pillar must be set up to invite the Deity's presence there, by offering Him a house to dwell in. It is a human instinct, and God encourages it. We see the same instinct at work in Solomon's Temple, and our own Houses of God. It is also precisely the same difficulty of realizing a deity without some abode, or apart from some object, which explains the many "houses of God," or local sanctuaries scattered throughout the land of Israel down to Hezekiah's day. The use of images, "ephods," for consulting God's Will, and a host of similar practices are all due to this same instinct.

The writer of Genesis, therefore, in speaking of Jacob's anointing a sacred stone with oil at Bethel, or the altar built by Abraham at Shechem, or the sacred oaks and wells, simply gives us a true picture of what was a customary usage of old, which lasted down to the writer's day. These natural objects were associated both by Canaanites and Hebrews with their respective ideas of God. These spots were already sacred when the Hebrews first reached Canaan, and the Jews were introduced by the Canaanites to these holy places. It does not, however, in the least follow that the Hebrews worshipped "spirits" there because the Canaanites did so. Everything points in the other direction.

Similarly, serious attempts have been made to find, in the earlier Bible books, proofs to show that in

Genesis days the Hebrews were addicted to "ancestor-worship," and a belief in the malign influence of the spirits of the dead. Semitic races commonly held that, immediately after death, the spirit of the deceased hovered near the corpse. This spirit was intensely alive and active, and able to hurt the relatives if not duly appeased. The advocates of the view that the Hebrews shared this belief appeal, in support of their theory, to such Jewish funeral customs as shaving the head or beard, cropping the hair, wounding the body, covering the face and especially the upper lip, rending the garments, going about in a filthy condition with unkempt hair, sprinkling ashes over the body, and so forth. It is generally accepted that these devices were adopted in primitive times so as to render oneself unrecognizable to the spirit of the dead relative. These mourning rites and ceremonies were naive attempts at disguise, precautions dictated by a sense of awe and fear of the ghost, a wish to avoid it and get it well away. No doubt, these practices originated on these grounds in remote barbaric days. But the Jews simply retained these customs,—precisely as we do still,—because they were time-honoured observances, survivals, of which they did not understand the meaning any more than we do, except as natural expressions of grief. These Jewish mourning customs prove nothing.

If any stress is to be laid on funeral customs, a far clearer trace of "spirit" days is to be seen in

Numb. xix. 14 sqq.: "This is the law, when a man dieth in a tent: . . . every open vessel, which hath no covering bound upon it, is unclean." This is decidedly a survival of times when the spirit of the dead man was supposed to hover near the corpse, ready to enter any hole, or open vessel, and hide there. So as to prevent all possibility of this departed spirit remaining in a house, all open vessels in or near the place where the dead body lay had to be carefully closed, covered, fastened down with a string, otherwise the spirit would enter into them and stay there in hiding. Unconsciously the Jews retained this curious old primitive custom, but it was probably meaningless to them, and does not necessarily betray any sympathy with a belief in spirits. With far greater reason could it be gravely maintained by future historians a thousand years hence that Christians of the twentieth century believed in the malign influence of the spirits of the dead because of many modern popular practices which point in that direction. To this day, for instance, Brandenberg peasants pour out a pail of water as the corpse leaves the house to prevent the spirit returning. Greenlanders take the body out of the window, instead of the door, to mislead it. Even now, Breton peasants leave the remains of the All Souls' supper on the table for their dead kinsfolk to partake of it; and a coin is still put in the hand of a corpse for its journey at an Irish wake. These rites all betray a clear belief in departed spirits, but

it would be a libel on our religion to assert that Christianity fosters this belief, and the Jewish religion at no time betrayed such clear evidences as this.

Much more to the point as a proof of a Hebrew belief in spirits and their power to cause disease, accidents, and all the minor ills of life: the belief in spirits that could be controlled by incantations and spells known only to sorcerer-priests,—was the strong hold which magic, wizards and witches, charms and amulets had on Israel throughout their history. Deut. xviii. 10, 11 refers to the prevalence of these superstitious customs even in the writer's day—700 B.C. “There shall not be found among you any one that useth divination, one that practiseth augury, or an enchanter, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a consulter with a familiar spirit, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For whosoever doeth these things is an abomination unto the Lord.” (R.V.)

There is not a shadow of a doubt that the Hebrews came to Palestine steeped in magic-lore. It is to be found everywhere, but the Babylonians, above all others, had reduced it to a fine art. No other race ever filled their world more with swarming hosts of nature-spirits, and their sacred literature of magic-hymns, incantations, and formulas of exorcism is of the richest, most elaborate and perfect type. Its sacred texts were chanted to ward off evil spirits, or worn as charms tied on as phylacteries. The Babylonians were skilled in interpreting omens from the

cries of birds and the entrails of victims at sacrifices, they could read the stars, and foretell the future by casting lots, divination, and consulting sacred images and oracles (Ezek. xxi. 21) as no other nation could. Is it any wonder that the Hebrews—Babylonians by origin—came to Canaan steeped in magic-lore, and practised it to the very last? Even in Israel's historic and religious days we find the Hebrews consulting the will of God by casting lots (1 Sam. xiv. 41 : Acts i. 26). They consulted ephod, teraphim, Urim and Thummim, that is, sacred images and the high-priest's breast-plate, as oracles. Gen. xlv. 5 tells us that Joseph divined with a cup.

These were looked upon as right and lawful methods of consulting God, legitimate sources of discovering what still lay hid behind the veil. The magic divination referred to in Deut. xviii. 10, 11 is quite different, and magic pure and simple. It was always regarded as wrong. "Enchanters, wizards, consultants with familiar spirits, necromancers" sought to bind and influence superhuman spirits or demons, either so as to restrain them from doing injury to people, or else to make them reveal to mortal man the unknown future. Thus the witch of Endor (1 Sam. xxviii. 7), at the request of Saul, summons Samuel from Sheol, and plays the part of *clairvoyante* as well. Even in the days of Isaiah the people resorted in large numbers to these occult modes of enquiry. "They shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto the wizards that chirp and that mutter : should not a people

seek unto their gods? on behalf of the living should they seek unto the dead^a?"

But here again we have no right to press too far the Bible evidence as to the prevalence of magic, clear as it is. So common was the popular belief in magic and witchcraft in England up to recent days—it is strong still—that English laws against witchcraft were only abolished in 1736. A statute of James I. enacts that "all persons invoking any evil spirit, or consulting, covenanting with, entertaining, employing, feeding, or rewarding any evil spirit, shall be guilty of felony, and suffer death," and this, too, in the days of the very Christian monarch who gave us our magnificent authorised version of the Bible! In the Roman and Greek Churches the form of exorcism of evil spirits still survives. Our own 72nd Canon of 1608 forbade attempts by the clergy to cast out devils by fasting and prayer unless by special license from the Bishop. By the side of these Christian Church and State injunctions, what becomes of the evidence of Deut. xviii. and other Bible passages? We have no more right to say that the popular belief in magic was recognized by the religious teaching of early Hebrew days than we have for holding Christianity responsible for such popular superstitions now.

Before we leave the subject of primitive survivals in Jewish worship, we must refer to one other very curious point which constantly meets us in the Bible—Jehovah worshipped in the shape of a bull.

^a Is. viii. 19, cf. 1 Sam. xxviii. 13.

We need only mention the Golden Calf of Aaron, and the sacred bulls of Jeroboam which he set up at Bethel and Dan. These were *not* a mere copy of the bull-gods of Egypt, but actually symbols of Jehovah Himself. We can see this clearly in Aaron's case. Israel, becoming impatient under the continued absence of Moses on Mount Sinai, prevailed on Aaron to make a God which should go before them. He therefore bids them collect all the gold ornaments of their wives and daughters, and out of these he fashions a molten calf of gold, and says, "*To-morrow shall be a feast to Jehovah.*" It was, then, palpably meant to be an image of Jehovah. It would, besides, be the height of absurdity for Aaron to represent an Egyptian deity as bringing them out of the hands of the Egyptians, and the words "these be thy gods which brought thee, O Israel, out of the land of Egypt" would be senseless. Equally absurd and impolitic would it have been for Jeroboam to try and wean Israel from the Jehovah-worship at Jerusalem by setting up a foreign god. Jeroboam posed as a national hero, commissioned by Jehovah Himself through His prophet Ahijah to wrest the Northern Kingdom from Rehoboam's hands because of his sin. He naturally would wish to appear a loyal, patriotic and righteous king who adhered to the God of his nation, Jehovah.

These bulls were nothing but a symbol of the strength and creative power of Jehovah, survivals of a far-off day when gods were represented in the form of animals. The animals were known not to be the

god ; the animal was merely a symbol of him. We might almost as well say that St. John meant the beasts^b before God's throne (Rev. iv. and v.) to be real beasts, or the Lamb of God to be a real lamb, as assert that Israel worshipped mere bulls as such.

In all we have said in this chapter we do not mean to imply that these early Hebrews were pure monotheists, or free from gross superstitions. They certainly were not. There doubtless was an abundance of old Babylonian superstitious beliefs prevalent in Israel in the days before Moses. All we suggest is that the evidence at our disposal is far too slight to guarantee anything but shrewd guesses on this point. Israel sprang from a polytheistic stock, and, among the people, there was ever a leaning towards old beliefs, a tendency to revert to older forms of worship. Still, even before Moses' day, the Hebrews had clearly made great strides towards a higher conception of one God. The reforms of Moses presuppose this development and appeal to it as already existing. No doubt the Hebrew religion at the time of the Hexateuch, far from being the lofty monotheism there portrayed, was sadly tinged with a polytheistic taint. Our next chapter will supply us with ample proof that in religion and morals the Hebrews, even after Moses, were a rude people, with ideas of right and wrong little in advance of their modern kinsmen, the Bedouin Arabs.

^b 'beast' is a poor translation of *hayyah* in Ezek., and of ζῷον in Rev., a creature partly human, partly animal and winged ; a divine symbol very common in the East, e.g. the winged human-headed Assyrian bulls, a type of God's swiftness, intelligence, and strength.

CHAPTER XI.

RELIGIOUS AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS OF ISRAEL AT THE TIME OF THE HEXATEUCH.

WE have attempted to prove that, while every other branch of the Semitic family clung to its many gods to the last, Israel had already some conception of one God long before the Exodus. However powerful and creative the genius of Moses may have been, he did not create a religion, any more than he made a nation, out of nothing. For a long time the Hebrews must have been following a separate line of religious development of their own quite distinct from all other Semites. They may have started,—they almost certainly did start,—with the same fundamental ideas of gods and spirits as other Semitic races. The popular superstitions so common in Israel clearly prove it. But the complete difference in the Divine names—Jehovah and Elohim—current among the Israelites, and their rapid growth in religious life after the Exodus, show that they had already gone through a long process of Divine training. They had already broken with heathenism for a considerable period. In the national memory this momentous step was always associated with Abraham. For reasons already stated, we believe this to be a

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pious and patriotic assumption on the part of the Genesis writers : but we equally believe that this step was taken hundreds and hundreds of years before the Exodus.

For very long after this conversion to Monotheism—it should rather be called Henotheism—Israel struggled in the grasp of two contending forces. On the one hand, polytheism, with its ancient superstitions and customs, was ever pulling them down : it was innate in their blood, and the example and influence of all surrounding nations fostered this instinctive tendency. The national conscience, on the other hand, still further spurred by men of God enlightened by His revelation, ever urged the Hebrews forward and upward. At the best, Israel's conception of Jehovah at this time was crude, earthy, elementary, very little in advance of other nations' ideas of their local heathen gods, but the monotheistic idea was there. The seed was little, but it was already beginning to sprout.

We propose now to examine some of the customs and institutions referred to in the Hexateuch—the priesthood, sacrifices, the “ban,” the law of retaliation, and so forth—so as to see if we can form some clear notion of the state of Society in Israel in the days immediately after Moses and Joshua.

Priesthood.—Very little is heard of *priests* then. It is true that the later books of the Hexateuch give us all the priestly caste as it existed in their own day, but this is a clear anachronism, a throwing back of the writers' ecclesiastical ideas into this Mosaic age.

The origin of the priesthood in Israel is a moot point, and whether there were any regular official priests at all in Moses' day is very much an open question. Up to a comparatively late period in Israel's history every Israelite offers his own sacrificial offering to Jehovah without any priestly aid. The Book of the Covenant (Exod. xx. 24) expressly tells him so to do. Under Saul, at a time when he still did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, the Israelites themselves sacrifice their animals and pour out the blood on the altar stone without any priestly assistance. Priests had no part in the sacrificial ritual at all. Any one could offer sacrifice. Israel was *literally* "a kingdom of priests" beyond the actual meaning of the words in Exod. xix. 6. The head of the family commonly exercised all priestly functions. To the eldest son, or to the favoured son exalted to the place of the eldest, belongs the "goodly raiment" (Gen. xxvii. 15), the "coat of many colours" (Gen. xxxvii. 3), in which we perhaps find the earliest trace of a sacerdotal vestment.

The priest in these early days is in no sense a minister of an altar, but only the door-keeper of a temple, the caretaker of the local sanctuaries scattered broadcast throughout the land. He is the custodian of the sacred images or other consecrated things, e.g. the Ark at Shiloh (1 Sam. iii. 3), the images in Micah's shrine (Judges xvii. 5), the "ephod" or plated image at Nob (1 Sam. xxi. 9). Such treasures needed a guardian. But, above all, it must

be remembered that wherever there was a temple there was an oracle, a kind of sacred lot, as a means of consulting God's Will, which could only be drawn where there was an ephod and a priest (1 Sam. xxiii. 6, sq.). In grave matters the Hebrew religion always ordered that the disputing parties should come "before God," that is, appeal to His decision by the casting of lots before Him (cf. Prov. xvi. 33). This lot-casting could be interpreted properly only by one skilled through long practice, that is, the custodian of the temple, or priest. As interpreters of God's oracles they would soon come to be regarded as judges, and rise in dignity. The word of a priest in delivering the oracles of God would and did carry greater weight than that of a seer or prophet, and became the ultimate solution of every claim and controversy (Exod. xxi. 6, xxii. 8, 1 Sam. ii. 25). In Gen. xxv. 22 Rebekah goes to enquire of an oracle, while in Gen. xxviii. 22 Jacob pledges himself to give tithes, and both of these allusions imply the existence of a sanctuary with a priest in charge of it. The story of Gen. xiv.,—where Abraham is represented as giving tithes to Melchizedek, the priest-king of Salem,—is, in its present form, merely a later priestly glorification of the later priesthood of Salem, that is, Jerusalem.

The Hebrew words for priests are *Kohen* and *Lewi*. *Kohen* probably means "he that stands before" a deity, as his servant; not necessarily or properly, a sacrificer. *Lewi* has by some been identified with the tribal name Levi, but is probably an official

name for those who, as the term implies, "attached themselves" to the sanctuary. Only afterwards did it become the family name of the priestly guild. From what has already been said, it is clear that the priests were not drawn originally from any one tribe.

Sacrifices.—The origin of sacrifices is also shrouded in the mists of a remote past. The view now generally accepted is that sacrifice arose at a time when primitive man's deities were beings of a low order, regarded as more or less human in their nature and tastes, while man's offerings were looked upon by the worshipper as gifts or presents to the God. Thus the Hebrew word for sacrifice, *minḥa*, means "gift," and it was a rule that "no one is to appear before Jehovah empty-handed." The further consideration that the gift or offering was generally associated with a sacrificial meal added another virtue to it. The efficacy of the sacrifice was enhanced by the fact that the god and his worshipper ate and drank together. Joint meals were the ordinary tokens of friendship among men, and the usual preliminaries to covenants and agreements; they thus knit the god and his worshipper in a common bond. Especially was there established a sacramental communion of the most binding nature between the two when sacred animals were sacrificed, and the god and his worshippers both partook of the meat and the blood of the same victim. The blood was considered especially important, for it is the seat of life; and the partaking of

the same blood, whether the worshipper's own blood or a victim's, created a sacred blood-covenant between the two parties of the most solemn and binding kind. Originally both parties undoubtedly tasted or touched the blood, but in later days it was given to the god by sprinkling it on his altar, and, on very solemn occasions, sprinkled on the worshippers as well, as at Sinai when Moses bound the people to God by a solemn covenant.

In the Hexateuch we find a very old rite in connection with sacrifice. When two parties made a contract or covenant, to make it as solemnly impressive, binding and full of awe as possible, one or more animals were cut into pieces, and these were carefully piled in two heaps, one opposite the other; then the contracting parties had to pass between them. We see this practice vividly described in Gen. xv. 9-17 in the covenant between Jehovah and Abram. The key to this rite clearly lies in the fact that, after this, if either party broke the contract he thereby invoked upon himself the curse of death so symbolically expressed by the pieces of the slaughtered animal. "God do so to me and more also." These awful solemnities naturally made the covenant inviolable and immutable, hence the term "an everlasting covenant."

Human sacrifices were constantly offered in early Israel, and right down to 700 B.C. The sacrifice of the first-born was supposed to be specially acceptable to Jehovah; even in spite of the protest against it

implied in Gen. xxii. There, God's lesson to Abraham surely is that Jehovah is satisfied with the disposition, the readiness to offer even one's dearest, and that He does not require this but has appointed the offering of an animal in its place. The passage, however, even when revised by a religious writer of a late date, clearly shows that in early days human sacrifices were not uncommon. Deut. xviii. 10 speaks of parents who make their sons and daughters pass through the fire, and even Ahaz (2 Kings xvi. 3) and Manasseh (2 Kings xxi. 6) did so to appease their God. Micah vi. 7 actually discusses seriously the question whether the sacrifice of the first-born is not the surest way of expiating guilt. Ezekiel, while condemning it as pure idolatry, implies that the order to offer the firstlings of the cattle gave rise in Israel to the false but common idea that human sacrifices of first-born children were still more pleasing to God.

In early times sacrifices consisted mainly in first-fruits of the soil, as one might naturally expect in simple agricultural societies ; e.g. fruits, corn, wine, milk, oil, as well as first-fruits of the flock. But animal offerings soon became the chief sacrifices ; they yielded a better sacrificial meal, and derived a peculiar significance from the shedding of the victim's blood. This blood significance seems inseparable from sacrifice, and survives even in the most sacred rite of Christian worship. "Thus for thousands of years was mankind educated to the

conception that "without shedding of blood is no remission of sin." (Dr. J. B. Jevons.)

Ban.—The "ban" was a war-custom of devoting beforehand an enemy and all his belongings to wholesale destruction. It is common in primitive races. Thus Decius Mus, in 340 B.C., when his troops were wavering in an important battle, repeated after the chief pontiff a formula by which he devoted "the legions and auxiliaries of the enemy together with himself to the nether-gods and the earth-goddess." The ban partook of the nature of a sacrifice, for everything belonging to the enemy was vowed and devoted to Jehovah, the war-god of Israel. "And Israel vowed a vow unto the Lord and said, If Thou wilt indeed deliver up this people into my hand, I will utterly destroy their cities" (Numb. xxi. 2). So Josh. vi. 17 sqq., "And the city (Jericho) shall be devoted, even it and all that is therein, to the Lord. . . . Keep yourselves from the devoted thing, lest, when ye have devoted it, ye take of the devoted thing: so should ye make the camp of Israel accursed, and trouble it."

It was, therefore, exactly like a covenant-sacrifice. In a covenant-sacrifice there were always three things. The terms of the agreement were clearly set forth, a solemn oath was taken to abide by the contract, and a curse thereby invoked if the contract was broken. We have exactly these three stipulations in the ban. The Israelites agree that, if Jehovah will deliver the enemy into their hands,

they pledge their solemn oath to devote this enemy wholesale—man, woman, child, beast and chattels—to Jehovah, under penalty of a terrible curse. We know how on the occasion of the capture of Jericho Israel broke its covenant, for Achan took of the devoted thing, and so the curse fell and “they were beaten hip and thigh, until they took the devoted thing from among them.” Similarly, Saul lost his kingdom because he did not carry out God’s command,—here it is God Who has placed the enemy under “ban,”—“Go smite Amalek, slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.” In Deuteronomy, all Canaan is “banned.” The ban is clearly a survival of Israel’s heathen days, and probably borrowed from Assyria where it was rife. It is a relic of *taboo* days.

Among other customs of prehistoric origin,—though they are not like these three directly connected with religion—we may mention the “avenger of blood,” “law of retaliation,” and “Levirate.”

The laws of “blood-revenge” and “retaliation” rest on the same fundamental principle, almost world-wide in its application, “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth”: “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.” By tribal custom, the next of kin was bound to avenge manslaughter not only on the criminal, but on his family as well, for they were all one at a time when the family was regarded as the unit. This law of retaliation is a practice common in all imperfectly organized

communities, where the individual has to take the law into his own hands. It is a survival of an age when there was no law and order, nor any guardians of justice and peace. With the advance of civilization and the gradual evolution of the state, the primitive law of personal vengeance slowly passes away, and the duty of safe-guarding the individual's rights passes to the state. The Book of the Covenant found the custom of blood-revenge in full force, and the aim of the Hebrew legislators was always to regulate this barbarous old custom, and humanize it by slow degrees; but it died hard. Like all peoples who have for long generations lived a lonely life in the desert, far from all law and order, compelled to rely on themselves to remedy wrongs, the Hebrews, as a race, were ever vindictive, and Christ found the principle of retaliation in full force in His day (S. Matt. v.).

The Levirate or law of marriage by which a man was bound to marry his brother's widow, if he died childless, is of great antiquity. It has even been plausibly traced to the ancient system of polyandry, one wife to many husbands. In Gen. xxxviii. it appears as unconditionally binding, whereas in Deut. xxv. it is only of moral obligation, on the principle that it was a calamity, tantamount to annihilation, that a man's life should become extinct. There was no idea of real life after death in those days, and a man who did not live on in his children was looked upon as clean blotted out of the book of life.

Enough has been said to show that morally the condition of Israel at this time was rude and primitive. These practices of the "ban," blood-revenge, retaliation, and agreements made binding by the most solemn oaths and terrible curses, clearly indicate that these early Hebrews had practically no conscious moral principles at all, as we now understand morality. Their morality, like that of most half-civilized races, depended on custom and tribal feeling, rather than on any fixed code or trained conscience, and hence admitted of the strangest contradictions. Even at a much later day, "No such thing is wont to be done in Israel," was the mainspring of their conduct, and the strongest condemnation of an act of wrong-doing. The marriage ties were lax, and custom allowed adultery with concubines, and female slaves, as a matter of course: but not with maidens, or married women. This was prohibited, not because it was morally wrong, but because they were the "property" of others, and it was an interference with their material possessions and rights. Custom demanded retaliation and blood-revenge. Custom required a certain amount of honesty towards a man's own countrymen, but any stranger might be deceived or cheated. The solemn and terrible covenant ceremonies show that a Hebrew's word was certainly not his bond. Lying and exaggeration were no reproaches. Only through dread of the most awful curse following could even solemn engagements with man or God be made

inviolable ; otherwise, perjury was not regarded in the light of a sin. The idea of sin itself did not exist, for it involves a sense of morality. The only idea approaching to it in these early minds was that, if a man violated certain religious customary usages, he thereby placed himself and his family under God's "ban." Fear of punishment was the only deterrent ; where man could do wrong with impunity, he had no scruples. These early Hebrews were a bold, hardy, enduring race ; self-reliant, owning no masters ; mutually distrustful, suspicious and wary ; men living in an age far removed from the vigilant control of law or order, each man therefore naturally doing what was right in his own eyes, and taking the law in his own hands. An impulsive, sensuous creature, full of desire, hatred and passion, he was apt to be selfish, lax, vindictive.

We cannot for one moment imagine that the Mosaic revelation and covenant at once reclaimed Israel from this low religious and moral standard. This would contradict all human experience. Indeed, the high moral and religious tone we generally attribute to Moses' Decalogue is itself an anachronism. We have already seen good reason to believe that the Ten Commandments did not originally bear anything like their present form or spiritual character. As they now stand, the Ten Words lay down the fundamental articles of universal religion, and the chief claims of morality. From the undisciplined

nature and the moral and religious condition of the people to whom the Decalogue was first given, it is almost certain that the developed form in which we have it is the result of many later revisions. Moses' original Commandments were probably not nearly so high-pitched, and dealt far rather with *rights* than morals. They were prohibitions forbidding men to tamper with what belongs to God or man as his by right of property or possession. In connection with adultery, for instance, the object was not to keep husbands or young men from immorality, so much as to ward off attack from one of the most important of a neighbour's rights of property. Moses sowed fruitful germs, germs of high moral and spiritual worth eventually, from which very gradually sprung up a conscious, personal, living realization of man's duty to God and his duty to his neighbour: but all that we read into his code now was not even dreamt of then.

So it was with Moses' revelation of Jehovah. It was a very material conception of one God, a God not of the whole universe, but purely Israel's own God. He is a God in form and tastes such an one as themselves, but much greater and stronger: a God who "with a mighty hand and stretched-out arm" brought them out of Egypt, and, like themselves, good to friends, but vindictively implacable to foes. He is a God Whose abode is Sinai, but Who goes about with the camp of Israel wherever it goes: this

camp is His sanctuary for the time being. More than this, it is now commonly agreed that Israel looked upon the Ark, not as a mere chest containing the Two Tables of stone, but as the symbol of God's Presence ; nay, Jehovah was conceived as actually residing in the Ark. It is only in Deuteronomy that it is known as the "Ark of the Law of Jehovah" : its name in the oldest Hexateuch sources being the "Ark of Jehovah," or "Ark of God." Sacrifice is done "before Jehovah" present in it, and so is the casting of lots, and other rites which are never performed except in the presence of God. Many modern Bible scholars^a even believe that the Ark never contained the Two Tables at all (as stated in Deuteronomy), but only rough sacred stones representing Jehovah Himself, and that it was these sacred "god-stones" within it that gave the Ark all its significance, and hallowed it in Israel's eyes. These stone fetishes would be quite in keeping with the whole spirit of the Mosaic age, though to such later writers as the authors of Deuteronomy and Kings the idea would be revolting. It involved a crude, material view of the Ark and its contents which the Deuteronomist and his generation could neither share nor understand, for they no longer regarded the Ark as God, or, at any rate, as God's dwelling-place. With their higher and more spiritual conception of God, they looked upon the Ark as a mere symbol, a token of God's Presence. These

^a e.g. Prof. Budde.

later Bible writers recollected that stones had originally been kept in the Ark, but they assert that these stones were always the Two Tables of the Law, and they respect the Ark only as the receptacle of these stone tables. From their day onward the Ark was no longer the "Ark of Jehovah," but "The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord" (Deut. x. 8 ; xxxi. 9, 25).

But was this Deuteronomist conception of the Ark the way in which the generation of Moses and Joshua or Hebrews generally for hundreds of years after looked upon it? To the earlier Hebrews Jehovah and the Ark appear to have been practically identical. The Ark was Jehovah's "house." This conviction is clearly reflected in the ancient fragment Numb. x. 35, 36, "When the Ark set forward, Moses said, Rise up, O Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered: when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the ten thousands of the thousands of Israel." It was this fixed belief that Jehovah was in the Ark which gave these primitive Israelites such faith in its might and power for victory. The Ark actually carried Jehovah with it wherever it went. It was not a mere holy wooden box, it was Jehovah's dwelling-place. Hence Israel's horror and dismay at its capture by the Philistines; though even then Jehovah asserts Himself, for Dagon the Philistine god falls as dead before Jehovah's Ark. Plagues curse the Philistines wherever it goes, so that they exclaim, "Who is able to stand before Jehovah, this exalted God?" Even as late as David the Ark is still spoken of as

Jehovah's dwelling-place (2 Sam. xv. 25). When David brings the Ark to Jerusalem, it is spoken of then as "the Ark which is called by the name of Jehovah of hosts"; and Uzzah was struck dead for even laying hands on it, in his kindly attempt to steady it and keep it from falling from the cart which was carrying it. All this would be meaningless had the Ark been regarded as a mere holy box containing the Two Tables of the Law. To these early Hebrews, incapable of realizing the Presence of God apart from some stone or symbol in which He could take His abode, the Ark with the sacred stones within it *was* God.

All this tends to prove what we have so often stated already, that the Israelites at this time were believers in one God of the Hebrews, Jehovah, but their ideas of Him were very little in advance of other nations' conceptions of their gods. Moses immensely developed this faith, and widened the already existing breach with heathenism, but not nearly to the extent commonly supposed. The idea of God then prevalent pictured Him as very strong, severe, vindictive; it involved little of a moral ideal. A nation's god usually is a more or less faithful reflection of the people themselves, in early days, and reacts on their character. Not till much later in Israel's history, therefore, can we expect to find a conception of a God loving, merciful and righteous, out of which will spring humaner thoughts of what man owes to man.

CHAPTER XII.

PERIOD OF THE JUDGES.

HITHERTO we have had no really reliable sources, no *contemporary* records to go upon. The Hexateuch could not have been written till 1000—900 B.C., much of it not till 500 B.C., so our conclusions from it are mostly of an inferential nature. Henceforth we are on much surer ground : we have at our command, for the period from the end of Joshua onwards, documents of real historical value.

Our main authorities for the age of the Judges of Israel, and the early Kings, Saul and David, are the Books of Judges, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles. The historical value of these books varies greatly, and it is necessary to give some account of them, their origin, aim and purpose, so as to appreciate their worth. To begin with, the following dates of their composition have been assigned to them by Prof. Driver :—

10th—9th century B.C. Original sources incorporated in Judges and Samuel.

7th century. Books of Judges and Samuel composed.

6th century. 1st and 2nd Kings composed.
Sources earlier in date.

4th century. 1st and 2nd Chronicles.

It is true that *Judges* and *Samuel* were only composed in the seventh century, but their editors had at their disposal at least two older documents narrating the history of this period. One dates back to about 1100—1000 B.C., the other is apparently of 800 B.C. More than this, the writers of the Books fortunately often give us, side by side, these two independent sources, written from two totally independent points of view. Little or no attempt is made to harmonize them, and so we get two duplicate accounts of the same facts, especially in the biographies of Saul and David.

To give an illustration of what is meant, let us take the twofold account given of the election of the first king, Saul. In 1 Sam. ix., x.—16 and xi. we have the older version. In 1 Sam. viii., x. 17—24, and xii. we get another and later account, and the two are not only different but inconsistent. In the former, Saul in search of his asses consults an *almost unknown* seer, Samuel, *at a time when Israel is crying for a deliverer from Philistine oppression, and God, through Samuel, readily chooses and appoints* Saul as His people's king and deliverer. In the later version, Samuel, *Jehovah's official representative, is the recognized judge of Israel*, and only *grudgingly* yields the reins of government to Saul at the people's urgent request, *in a time of perfect peace*, for Philistia had already been subdued. Both God and Samuel here regard Israel's petition for a king as an act of

religious apostasy, and prophesy endless calamities in consequence.

These discrepancies between the two versions frequently occur. In character the tenth century document is a graphic, simple, straightforward history, with very simple religious conceptions, while the 800 B.C. narrative is more after the style of the prophetic school. If we combine the two, we thus obtain a true and reliable picture of this period by two independent writers, and these ancient biographies of Saul and David are of the first rank and value.

But, as in the Hexateuch, a later editor has revised the whole work, and in their present form these books bear clear traces of the moral and religious influences at work in the seventh century B.C. Another hand as late as the fifth century B.C. has also coloured the teaching of these books.

The same thing applies exactly to the Books of Kings, composed in the sixth century, except that here the mere writing of a history is not the main object of the writer. He writes with a deliberate religious and moral purpose. "History is by him employed as the vehicle of certain special religious lessons, drawn from the past, which he desires to inculcate upon his own age, and upon future generations. The religious standpoint of the writer of Kings is that of the Book of Deuteronomy. He is deeply imbued with the spirit of this book. His aim is to show that loyalty to Jehovah means prosperity, disobedience to His statutes failure and

catastrophe, and that Jerusalem is the one and only centre of worship" (Burney).

1 and 2 *Chronicles* is a very late composition, long after the exile. It begins with Adam and ends abruptly in the middle of Cyrus' decree of restoration. The writer was deeply imbued with the ecclesiastical spirit of his own age, 500—400 B.C. Israel was no longer a nation, but a Church: its laws were those of the Priestly Code; Jerusalem with its Temple was the whole centre of its life. We see this ecclesiastical habit of mind on every page of this book of *Chronicles*, and this colours the whole of its history. Its value is rather that of a sermon than a history. It is not history falsified. The writer is too sincere and morally earnest to be capable of this: but his main aim is to "edify" his readers, with an obvious religious object in view, and an intense belief in God as the Moral Governor of the universe. *Chronicles* may be used as a supplement to the earlier history as given us in Samuel and Kings, but its chief value lies in the key it furnishes us to a better understanding of what religious Jews thought and felt in the Chronicler's own day, the fourth century B.C. For the historical period it describes its witness is far from being of the first order.

Thus the books of Judges and Samuel are a true and reliable portrait of the period they depict. That of *Kings* is also of great historical value, often retaining the original colour of the older documents which it uses as its source of information. It is, however,

professedly written from a pronounced religious standpoint. *Chronicles* is a useful supplement, but mainly of value for the information it gives us of the writer's own day.

The Septuagint takes the books of Samuel and Kings together as "the four books of kingdoms." In a sense, this is better than our division, for we cannot strictly speak of different authors of these books. All we can say is that an editor, or successive editors, in each case took already existing historical documents of this period, and arranged them in their present continuous form. In some cases (e.g., in the picture of David's court) the same original document was used by each editor.

A curious trait of the Hebrew mind is worth noticing here, in connection with (1) the duplicate accounts of the same events so constantly to be found in Bible books, and (2) the strange way in which the writers of *Samuel*, *Kings*, and *Chronicles* deal with the same period of history, write it from their own standpoint, produce each a different picture of it, then place it side by side with the others. We saw exactly the same thing in the so-called Mosaic books. The Hexateuch consists of, at least, four distinct layers, the work of four periods wide apart: in themselves they are as distinct as so many geological strata, yet there they lie side by side in one literary whole as if they professed to be the work of one hand. How came these different elements, as distinct as wine, oil and water, to be embodied in one

literary whole, without being better harmonized? A modern writer would have treated the material differently: we had almost said more skilfully and artistically. His sense of harmony, symmetry and proportion, his keen perception for organic unity would have made him blend and fuse the narratives together so as to cast them in the same mould and give them exactly the same type and character. His own individuality would have stamped itself upon the whole material, and it would have left his hands clearly marked as the handiwork of one man. Why did the Bible writers not do the same thing?

This is due to a peculiar characteristic of the Hebrew mind. It has been truly said: "The Semitic genius does not at all lie in the direction of organic structure. In architecture, in poetry, in history, the Hebrew adds part to part instead of developing a single notion^a." Thus it has been pointed out that his Temple is a combination of many cells placed side by side; the 119th Psalm is formed by giving eight verses to each of the letters of the alphabet and setting these twenty-two divisions side by side; and similarly the Hexateuch is made up of four distinct layers, wide apart in date and style, again placed side by side to form one literary whole.

In default of this sense for organic unity we need not then be surprised to find (e.g. in Samuel) a writer using two independent documents as his sources of information, taking large extracts from

^a Robertson Smith.

both, extracts often dealing with the same event, and mutually inconsistent, yet placing them side by side with little or no attempt at harmonizing them. The inconsistency would not strike him as it jars on us now. The inconsistencies of Deuteronomy and the Priestly Code would likewise escape him, especially in an uncritical age; so would the lack of harmony between the versions of the same historical period as portrayed by *Samuel*, *Kings*, and *Chronicles*. In a sense, this is a blessing for the modern Bible student, for the various layers are so easily distinguishable that it is the easiest thing in the world for the critic to sort them, and allot them to their respective dates and schools of thought. It is only the latest redactors and revisers who give him some trouble, for they have attempted to fuse the parts together at times, and make them dovetail.

For the period of the Judges our authority is the book of that name. It has two commencements. Judges i.—ii. 6 is by a quite independent writer, and gives us an account of its own, different often from Joshua's, of the first settlement in Canaan. Judges ii. 6—xvi., on the other hand, begins by repeating word for word the closing words of Joshua's history (Josh. xxiv. 28, 31), and so links this book to Joshua. Joshua had told us that Israel served Jehovah during the lifetime of the great conqueror. Judges ii. repeats this, and goes on to prove that it was precisely because succeeding generations forgot Jehovah that foreign enemies oppressed them time after time. So

we get the same lesson repeated over and over again. In each case we begin with a falling away from God. This is invariably followed by punishment in the form of a foreign oppressor. Then the Israelites in distress cry to Jehovah, Who promptly raises a deliverer or judge, and for a time the Hebrews are faithful to God. Immediately on the judge's death the religious apostasy begins again, and the same results follow, six times over. But the sources of the writer's information are much older than his lessons drawn from them, and really of very great historic value. The Song of Deborah, for example, is supposed to be one of the oldest passages in the Bible; and the Book of Judges generally is one of the most valuable and interesting documents in the Old Testament.

The period of the Judges covers the time when Israel was securing a foothold in Canaan, and ousting the Canaanites. During this process of fusion between the two nations, Canaan's influence on Israel's religion will naturally be very strong. It was then that the Jews, new to the land, were introduced to the old sanctuaries and sacred places of Canaan, and learnt to worship Baal, the local god, with his corrupting forms of worship.

Of Israel's morals during this period little good can be said. A time of bloodshed and anarchy always impairs the vitality of virtue, and, in Israel, when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judg. xvii. 6), very strange things were done in the land. We need only instance Jephthah's

vow : Samson's vagaries : and the story of Gibeah (Judg. xix.), when a Levite takes the corpse of his abused concubine, cuts it up in pieces, and sends them to the various tribes. As Dean Stanley points out : " it would seem as if the Book of Judges had been left in the sacred record to impress upon us the human, nay, barbarian element which plays its part in sacred history. It is a period of disorder, anarchy, license. We cannot pretend that Samson and Jephthah, hardly that Gideon or Barak, are characters which we should have selected of devout men, or servants of God. In any other history we should regard them as wild free-booters, stern chieftains, passionate, revengeful, lax, superstitious."

The period of settlement in Canaan occupied a long time. It was a continuation of Joshua's struggle, only on a smaller scale. After the united effort described in the Book of Joshua, every tribe now fought for its own hand, and the work was naturally incomplete. Had the Canaanites possessed any spirit of union among themselves the Israelites must have been chased out of the country, but they were a mixed population, and hopelessly divided. The three great crises in the struggle were the union of the tribes against Sisera and the Canaanites ; the victory over the Midianites ; and the Philistine danger in the South, which forced the tribe of Dan to migrate to the North, and ultimately led to the establishment of a monarchy. During this time, and after, a slow and silent change of immense impor-

tance was going on. The old population of the country, instead of being exterminated as being under Jehovah's "ban," slowly became amalgamated with their conquerors. Hence Israel's numbers grew enormously in a few generations, so that whereas in Deborah's time the fighting men numbered 40,000, in Saul and David's reign we find a population of close on three millions.

At the same time the Hebrews learnt the agricultural industries of the Canaanites, and quietly entered into their labours. This change naturally affected their religion as well.

As we have seen, Jehovah was looked upon by the Hebrews as Israel's own God—not the god of any other nation. These other nations had, even in Israel's eyes, true gods of their own. No one but Israel had any claim on Jehovah, neither had Jehovah on them. As it was in the Arabian peninsula round Sinai that Jehovah had revealed Himself to Israel, it was Sinai that was regarded even now as His special dwelling-place. On the other hand, as "Captain of the Host" (Josh. v. 14), as Jehovah Sabaoth, Israel's War God, He was supposed to be accompanying Israel, to be in the Ark, in the Hebrew invasion of Canaan. Israel's enemies were Jehovah's enemies, and if and when He and Israel together conquered the Canaanites and ousted them, so would Jehovah, Israel's God, conquer Baal, Canaan's god, eject him from his own land, and rule there in his stead. In those days the fortunes of a nation's god

rose and fell with the fortunes of his people, as in Babylon of old. Even in the eyes of Israel, when the struggle between Canaan and themselves was keen, and the issue still in the balance, it was because Baal was disputing every inch of his land with Jehovah.

More than this, even the subjugation of the Canaanites,—though it showed that Jehovah, Israel's champion, had finally triumphed over Baal, the war-god of Canaan,—did not quite dethrone Baal as god in his own land. The *soil* of Canaan was his still. Therefore the produce of the land, the corn, oil and wine, Israel regarded as his gift. Hence Israel long considered it quite right to hold fast to their own patron God, Jehovah, especially in war, and yet worship the god of the land, Baal, as the giver of the fruits of *his* land. Thus they felt that they were giving each his due, satisfying each in his own proper sphere.

With their settlement and amalgamation with the Canaanites, the Israelites embraced a new civilization. This was undoubtedly a step forward in the right direction, but it brought its accompanying drawbacks and dangers. Under conditions of peace, the tribes which had been united in the face of a common peril split up again into independent units. The camp, the old sanctuary of God, was broken up, and the various tribes and families scattered and settled all over the land. Israel was too busy with its own individual affairs, too much engrossed in its own farms

and family circles, too easily seduced to a cult like Baal's, to remember Jehovah. Jehovah made a heavy demand upon life and morals; Baal-worship, with its sensuous associations and easy morality, appealed strongly to easy-going Jews. It made it so easy to serve god and enjoy oneself at the same time.

The history of the Book of Judges shows that Israel often succumbed to both these dangers. The nation split up into independent mutually-distrustful tribes, and the people constantly fell away from Jehovah. Yet God ever fanned into flame the smouldering spark of loyalty to Himself in the hearts of His people, and showed them that self-indulgence is not life, nor Baal license their best good. The Philistines were the means of arousing them out of their slumber and sloth; they first expelled Dan from their lands, then defeated the tribe of Joseph at Aphek, carrying off in triumph the very Ark of Jehovah.

Out of very shame, the Israelites now roused themselves to action. A wave of religious revival and patriotic enthusiasm spread all over the land. A spirit of religious inspiration came over Israel. Prophets suddenly, and for the first time, sprung up on all sides, full of a new religious national fervour, and, accompanied by others swept into the same stream of ecstatic enthusiasm, awakened the national conscience. Their prophesying was a kind of public worship at the high place or sanctuary to which they went with pipe and song, and, as con-

stantly happens, their enthusiasm was contagious, and reacted on the surrounding population. Soon the whole nation was roused ; it only wanted a leader.

Then it was that Samuel, not a prophet but a seer of the old type, seized the opportunity and came to his country's rescue ; for the national distress weighed upon his heart. He saw the necessity for united action, and the great advantages to be derived by a nation from a king, for the surrounding nations had shown him the value of a monarchy. He did more than this : he discovered the very man who was wanted, Saul, the son of Kish.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE EARLY MONARCHY.

IT is not necessary for us to enter into the details of the history of Israel during the monarchy: the main facts of the period are too well known and established to require critical treatment. There is, however, one interesting question connected with the book and life of Samuel which cannot thus be overlooked. We have already noted the curious fact that there are two different and apparently inconsistent accounts, in the book of Samuel, of the part played by him in the election of Saul as king. In the older version, Samuel is an almost unknown seer who plays a comparatively subordinate rôle in this great national departure, and his influence on the fortunes of the nation thereafter is very limited in extent. This view stands in such striking contrast to the rest of the Biblical biography of Samuel, and to the traditional conception of his life and work, that it cannot be passed over in silence, but calls for some explanation. It is quite evident that, in its present form, the book of Samuel has passed through several hands. Each editor has supplemented his predecessor's work; preserved for us new facts, often of considerable historical value, but largely coloured by

the religious views of a later age. In other words, we have here another illustration of the marked absence of a keen sense for unity referred to in the previous chapter. Inconsistent pictures of the same event and person are drawn by different painters and hung side by side without any clear perception of their incongruity.

Prof. Wellhausen admirably and very plausibly accounts for the widely different nature of the Samuel narratives on this wise: "Four stages of tradition can be distinctly traced in the biography of Samuel. Originally (ix.—x. 16) he is simply a seer, but at the same time a patriotic Israelite who is touched to the heart by the extremities to which his country has been reduced, and who uses his authority as seer to impress upon the man whom he has perceived to be fit for the task the conviction that he has been called to be the helper and leader of Israel. Samuel's greatness lies in his arousing into activity one greater than he: after this, he is no longer seen. But his meteoric appearance and disappearance created a wondering admiration which led to the production of the narrative of his childhood.

"On the other hand the circumstance that after the meeting with Saul nothing more is heard of the seer gave countenance to the belief that a rupture must have taken place between them very soon. The fact that Jehovah does not confirm on the throne him whom He has chosen to be king, but overthrows Saul's dynasty, supported this view. So we get the

second stage in the tradition of Samuel's life, where he is no longer a seer, but a prophet who, after anointing Saul, has to his sorrow laid upon him the duty of announcing his rejection.

"The step from the second to the third stage is easy. Here Samuel transfers the unction, withdrawn from Saul, to David, whom he sets up against his rejected predecessor as the rightful king by the grace of God.

"But hitherto Samuel has invariably been represented as the originator of the monarchy. It is reserved for the last stage,—in the days after the exile,—to represent him as one who resists to the utmost of his power the desire of the people to have a king. In the days before the monarchy, Israel is here pictured as a Church under God with Samuel as its head: hence the feelings which he expresses."

The general trend of modern scholarship has been to harmonize these various representations of Samuel's biography, which at first sight appear to be utterly inconsistent. It is pointed out that the later narratives are clearly derived from independent original sources, and that although the older narrative gives no account of Samuel's childhood, his connection with Eli at Shiloh and so forth, this supplementary version is not necessarily unhistorical. All that the incongruous biography proves is that different editors of Samuel looked at the matter from different religious standpoints, and coloured their portraits accordingly, so that they differ in form. The later writer of

prophetic days, and especially in the times after the Exile, facing history from a purely religious, even sacerdotal point of view, would regard the establishment of the monarchy as an act of apostasy. Its political importance would be quite a secondary consideration. His interest and gaze would be focussed on Samuel the prophet and priest, the official mouthpiece of Jehovah, and naturally there would be a strong tendency to magnify his office and over-estimate his influence. We cannot deny the existence of this religious colouring nor refuse to take it into account in estimating the value of the later narratives, but this does not necessarily imply that these later versions are unhistorical. They are clearly founded on old and independent records and traditions, and therefore have a decided historical value of their own as a supplement to the earlier and more authoritative narrative.

We shall now leave the historical part of the narrative and survey in rapid review the evolution in man's conception of God during this period; and the gradual rise of Jehovah's organized mouthpieces in the person of priests, prophets, and kings.

All through the early monarchy Jehovah is still looked upon as clothed with a human body; but it is beginning to dawn on men's minds that He is too great and unapproachable to be any longer visible in purely human form, too august and sublime to talk and eat with men face to face. God is still

vividly realised as a Person, and as man is made in His image and likeness, men look upon Him as a magnified human Being with hands, eyes, mouth, lips, ears and feet. He still appears to men, but not in His perfect nature, only as a pale manifestation of Himself in angelic form. Even as early as the book of Joshua, only once is He made to appear to Joshua in His character of Jehovah Sabaoth, God of Hosts,—“as Captain of the Host am I come.” Elsewhere He is visible only in the form of an angel: “truly I will send My angel before thee : take heed of Him, and hearken unto His voice, for My name is in Him.” This is a great advance on previous ideas of a God “Who walked in the garden in the cool of the day” (Gen. iii. 8); “came down to see the tower which men had built” (Gen. xi. 5) ; or “appeared to Abram, and ate butter and milk and veal” (Gen. xviii. 8). The idea of a God visible in bodily form is beginning to jar on man’s higher conception of Jehovah.

Jehovah is still, however, regarded as purely Israel’s God. He has no claim on other nations nor they on Him. It seems strange to us to realize that even David shared this view. In 1 Sam. xxvi. 19 he bitterly complains of his hard lot in being driven out of Jehovah’s land and compelled to dwell in Philistia where he will have to be under the protection of other gods,—the gods of Philistia,—for there he will be outside the sphere of Jehovah’s jurisdiction. “Cursed be the children of men before

the Lord; for they have driven me out this day that I should not cleave unto (have no share in) the inheritance of the Lord, saying, Go, serve other gods." (R.V.)

Images of Jehovah are still quite common. In the period of the Judges we find Gideon fashioning out of 1,700 shekels of gold an ephod or image of Jehovah; and so does Micah, who hires Jonathan, a descendant of Moses, to be his priest (Judg. xvii. 12). Even David not only tolerates these little images in his house,—1 Sam. xix. 13, where Michal, his wife, takes one and places it on his bed,—but he also consults an ephod, or image, as an oracle. Even as late as the days of Hosea (750 B.C.) these images seem to have been regarded as perfectly unobjectionable (Hos. iii. 4). We have already seen that the golden bulls of Jeroboam were intended to be not heathen idols, but images of Jehovah Himself. This image worship is perfectly intelligible, and a natural instinct of human nature, innocent in itself. It is so difficult to grasp the idea of a God whom you cannot see. An invisible infinite God is an abstract conception which never quickens the heart into life or warmth, and a visible picture of Him of some kind the human heart craves for. Some gifted few can form mental pictures of God that satisfy all their needs, others can realize Him in the graphic word-pictures and imagery of the Bible. Many, however, can only grasp any clear idea of God from a material visible painting or statue. When a certain spiritual

level has been reached, this visible image may be a real aid to devotion, but on lower planes the worshipper stops at the image itself, and sinks back into heathenism: the image to him *is* God, not a mere symbol or reminder of Him; and so it continually worked out in Israel. To the unspiritual masses the image became a mere fetish; the practice led them into great extravagances, and the religious writers and prophets all along had a hard up-hill fight to stem this idolatrous tendency.

Altars and sacred places, in this period, are to be found everywhere. Earth and rough stones, always ready to hand; or any other materials available are allowable for the construction of these temporary altars. And Jehovah is ready to come to His worshippers and bless them, not in the one place where He causes His name to be celebrated,—there is no such central place of worship yet,—but at every place. Wherever there was an ephod and teraphim, there a shrine existed, and a priest would be found to cast the lot and give oracles. As for sacred days of worship regularly and officially appointed, there were none except the great Feast days—three in number—when “a feast was proclaimed unto the Lord.” The Sabbath was observed, but only as a day of rest. It afterwards underwent a total transformation by making it a day of holiness, but originally it was apparently unaccompanied by any religious worship, or very simple and rudimentary, if any.

For a long time after the establishment of the

monarchy there was still a natural tendency to revert to Baal worship, for this Baal worship had taken deep root. The judges had been not only deliverers of Israel from foreign oppression but, above all, upholders of Jehovah as the one God of Israel as against Baal. Thus Gideon threw down the altar of Baal that his father had built, and erected in its place an altar to Jehovah. The complete subjugation of Canaan by Jehovah first lowered Baal's prestige in Israel's eyes. Then the Hebrews saw one after another of Baal's sacred places wrested from him with impunity by Gideon and others and hallowed to Jehovah, till His Ark was actually enthroned in Jerusalem, Baal's stronghold. More than this, in course of time as man's religion became more spiritual, Jehovah was regarded as enthroned in *heaven*, whence He sent His sunshine, rain, and dew. He was therefore acknowledged as the giver of all good things, including the kindly fruits of the earth which had hitherto been considered Baal's gift to men dwelling in Baal's land.

But this higher spiritual conception was of slow growth. It took centuries to root out the fixed idea in men's minds that each land and people had its own special god; and this explains much in the Bible which is otherwise unintelligible. Thus when Solomon married a Moabite wife, he erected for her god Chemosh a temple on the mount of Olives. She, a Moabitess, was under Chemosh's protection, not Jehovah's, and Solomon considered it only a fair

and reasonable thing to do for her. He himself never dreamed of joining in her Chemosh worship. Jehovah was his God, and Chemosh could not help or protect him.—Ahab did exactly the same thing for his wife Jezebel. She was allowed her Baal chapel and priests. Many Israelites reverted to Baal-worship in consequence, though probably not to the extent which the later Bible writer seems to imply.

A curious custom in connection with worship is mentioned in the Bible. If a man wished to change his native god and come under the protection of the god of another land, it was believed that if he could bring land from the new god's country, he could then worship him and be under his protection even in a strange land. We see this in Naaman's request to Elisha for two mules' burden of earth,—Israel's earth, and therefore Jehovah's,—so that even in Syria he may worship Jehovah, as he is resolved never to serve any other god (2 Kings v. 17). From the tone of the passage, we can see that the sacred writer shared Naaman's view that this was a feasible plan.

We have said that this period also saw the birth of priests, prophets and kings; and we shall say a few words on each.

Priesthood.—Up to this time, as we have seen in former chapters, the priest was not strictly the minister of an altar, but the custodian of an ephod, image or sanctuary. Wherever there was an image and shrine, there was an oracle, and to it people referred "before God" in difficult law-suits or con-

troversies. An appeal was made to God's decision by the casting of lots, which was always done by the priest. Therefore, in course of time, priests were looked upon as final judges. Priests were formally installed into office by "filling the hand," an expression which is not at all clear. Some understand it to mean that "earnest" money was placed in the hand of the priest; others that certain portions of the sacrifice were placed in his hand, either for himself or for him to lay on the altar. Thus Micah fills the hand (A.V. "consecrates") of one of his sons, so that he becomes his priest (Judg. xvii. 5). He does precisely the same thing later on to the Levite whom he hires as his priest (xvii. 12) (cf. Exod. xxviii. 41).

Every one who cared to provide ephod and teraphim, and hire a priest, might have a temple and oracle of his own at which to consult Jehovah; but the most important temple was at Shiloh, where the Ark was kept, and to which people resorted at the great festivals. There officiated Eli and his house (1 Sam. ii. 27 sqq.). Although anyone could offer sacrifices in person, and still did so, a certain portion of each sacrifice was the portion of the priest, and at Shiloh it was his legal due, which he exacted by force at times (1 Sam. ii. 12 sqq.). Priests were not confined to any tribe, but Levites were preferred, and a priest handed on his office to his sons (Judg. xviii. 30). As sanctuaries multiplied, the priesthood became more and more a separate caste. It was not, however, till subsequently, especially in

the days of the Temple, that any dignity or esteem attached to their office, though the late writers of the Bible books frequently appear to modify and add to the text so as to magnify the priestly office wherever they possibly can.

Prophets.—The prophets of this age are a class quite distinct from the later canonical or writing prophets. Of the origin of the earlier prophets at the time of Samuel we know but little. 1 Sam. ix. 9 tells us “he that is now called a prophet was before-time called a seer.” But this passage is a marginal note of late date which has crept into the text, and does not help us much, for the only seer of whom we know anything is Samuel. The “seer” was a wise man familiar to all Semitic races, a man of exceptional insight who could be advantageously consulted even in private matters like the loss of the asses of Kish: he had the gift of second sight. He was a man of great individuality. The prophets, on the other hand, in these early days lived in communities or bands, and were the outcome of the intense wave of patriotic enthusiasm and religious revival which burst over Israel after their defeat by the Philistines at Aphek. Like Moslem dervishes, these prophets roused their hearers to a state of intense excitement by their prophesyings or preachings, which were accompanied by music and song. The effect produced was very contagious, and even such an unlikely man as Saul is carried away by it. “Thou shalt meet a band of prophets, and the spirit

of the Lord will come mightily upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man" (1 Sam. x. 5, 6, cf. xix. 20). Under this ecstatic influence of the spirit a man did things beyond his ordinary powers. He was carried away by an impulse sudden and unaccountable, so that he himself, and onlookers as well, wondered at it. There were "schools of the prophets," i.e., communities of them, as at Ramah, Bethel, Jericho, Gilgal; and they were undoubtedly the product of the wave of intense religious and patriotic feeling which passed over Israel after the Philistine victory at Aphek. The sense of national shame awakened men's consciences, while the struggle for freedom called forth a feeling of dependence on Jehovah, and in so doing united the nation and raised religion to a far higher plane.

The great prophets of the early monarchy are Samuel, Nathan, Elijah and Elisha. They have one feature in common with later prophets, *they are great national teachers and religious reformers*. They present themselves unsummoned even before kings, and by sharp condemnation of their sins obtain, in God's name, satisfaction for outraged morality and justice, as Nathan did of David. At all times this national patriotic spirit was the mark of the prophets. They ever sought to guide Israel on high moral and religious lines, openly rebuking king and people alike, and representing Jehovah as a righteous God Who avenges wrong.

These earlier prophets took an active part in the

state, even deciding who should succeed to the throne. It was Samuel who placed Saul and David on the throne, and Nathan determined who should succeed David. Elijah denounced the dynasty of Omri: while Elisha set in motion the revolution which overthrew it. Elisha was also the embodiment of the national spirit in the Syrian wars. In fact, Elijah and Elisha were the national bulwark, "the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof." After Elisha the prophets withdraw from national and party conflicts: they no longer head revolutions; still they remain statesmen as ever. In their eyes the kingdom, the state, and the rule of Jehovah are one and the same; so they oppose, warn, and counsel king and nation whenever occasion demands. These early prophets equally with their later canonical successors are the real upholders of Jehovah in Israel, and very jealous of His name and honour. They are Israel's religious and moral saviours, its spiritual and moral reformers, and the recognized mouthpieces of God in His revelations to man.

Kings.—The same cause which produced prophets produced kings as well. The danger of extinction at the hands of the Philistines was imminent, and unity in feeling and action was essential if Israel was to be saved. Kingship in the East always carried grave dangers to the people with it, and they were not absent in Israel, as the sequel showed. But the twelve tribes had somehow to be kept compactly united, and kingship was better than absorption by the

Canaanites, or annihilation by the Philistines. Samuel, however, took care that the king should be selected as Jehovah's servant and representative on earth. The sovereign ruled by divine right, was chosen by Jehovah's prophet, and formally installed with all due religious ceremony, so as to impress both king and people with the solemnity of the office. Thus Samuel first anoints Saul (as he did David later on) privately, then presents him to the people as "him whom the Lord hath chosen," and they shout "God save the King" (1 Sam. x. 1, 24). It was for the express purpose of being the leader and saviour of Jehovah's people that the king was originally chosen and called, and his rule prospers or ends just according as the king does that which is right or wrong in God's eyes.

Therefore kings always looked upon themselves as Jehovah's direct representatives, his vice-gerents on earth, and in that capacity acted as the religious heads of the nation, *its chief sacrificing priests*. Saul, David, and Solomon thus constantly offer sacrifice in person, as a matter of course. It was only the later Bible writers and editors who—jealous for the privileges of their priestly order, and considering it an encroachment upon their sacerdotal province—represented Jehovah as angry with kings (e.g. Saul) for personally offering sacrifices, and attributed their downfall to this transgression. As a matter of fact, in David's and Solomon's day, kings were not only the chief sacrificers (2 Sam. vi. 17 ; 1 Kgs. viii. 5 ; ix. 25), but, more than this, David and Solomon both

stood by the altar, and pronounced the blessing upon the people, a very priestly act (2 Sam. vi. 18 ; 1 Kgs. viii. 55).

As to the social condition of the people during the early days of the monarchy, it was, on the whole, a time of comfort and prosperity. In family life polygamy was rare, but a man might have as many concubines as he chose (Judg. viii. 30 ; 2 Sam. v. 13 ; 1 Sam. i. 2). The wife was esteemed and respected, but still regarded in the light of a chattel^a. Parents had full power over their children, and could sell or even sacrifice them (Ex. xxi. 7 ; Neh. v. 5 ;—Lev. xviii. 21 ; 2 Kings xxiii. 10), but as a rule children and slaves were very kindly treated, and the latter were regarded almost as members of the family (cf. Ex. xxi. 5 ; cf. 1 Chron. ii. 35). Agriculture was the common occupation, except East of Jordan and in some parts of Judah where pastoral life still prevailed. The towns had multiplied and largely grown in importance, and trade was extensively carried on, in conjunction with the Syrians and Phoenicians, with the outside world both by sea and land. Solomon had a large number of ships which went far afield (1 Kings v., ix., x. ; 2 Chron. ix.). Wealth and luxury increased, and their usual evils large estates (Is. v. 8), oppression (Am. ii. 6), mortgages (cf. Neh. v. 5), a lax life (Am. vi. ; Hos. iv.), and a falling off in piety naturally followed in the train of this prosperity.

^a The husband was the "master," the wife, the "owned one" (Heb.). No Israelitess was "free" (exc. a widow) (cf. Ex. xx. 17).

Travelling inland was difficult and dangerous, for the roads were always few and badly kept and infested with robbers. Law and order were not well regulated, and the administration of justice was more or less haphazard. The king could be appealed to as judge in all cases, and the elders also administered justice after a fashion, but in actual practice a man had mainly to depend upon himself for redress of wrongs. We are not, therefore, surprised to read constantly in Bible pages that kings, priests, and rich alike robbed and oppressed the poor and weak. With such a bad example in high places, the people naturally copied their betters, and vice flourished; justice was bought and sold; widows and orphans were defrauded. In the face of this wholesale corruption and abundance of wealth, the natural sequel must inevitably be arrogance, luxury, ostentation, and a general perversion of moral ideas. Thus, in spite of the halcyon days of David and Solomon, days to which later Jews always looked back with intense pride and longing, there was something rotten in the state of Israel, the chosen people of God. Well might Amos represent Jehovah as saying to them, "You only do I know, therefore do I visit upon you all your sins" (cf. iii. 2). The cry of the poor, the widow and oppressed had reached His ears, but Israel would not understand. Jehovah is our God, "us alone does He know," therefore He must be for us, happen what may, was the fixed idea in the Hebrew mind; and as we shall see, the preaching of a God merciful but righteous fell on deaf ears.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CANONICAL PROPHETS.

WHEN we speak of prophets nowadays we usually think of the canonical or writing prophets such as Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah. Like the older prophets—whose successors they are in one sense—these “men of God” were Israel’s moral and religious saviours and reformers, the upholders of Jehovah, very jealous of His honour and name, His chief mouthpieces. But there is a wide difference and contrast between the new school and the old.

The old schools of the prophets were the natural outcome of the wave of religious and patriotic revival which burst over Israel after its defeat by the Philistines at Aphek. In their day they supplied a deep and crying want. In and after the period of the Judges religious life in Israel was at the very lowest possible ebb. There was nothing approaching to a national Church in the land ; no centre of religious worship and unity. The number of little local shrines and chapels scattered here, there and everywhere did absolutely nothing to foster spiritual life or keep the spark of religion alive. The religious standard of Israel was therefore miserably low. The sudden outburst of religious revival awakened by the pro-

phetic schools was thus an immense gain, and at once raised religion to a far higher plane. A wave of religious enthusiasm spread through Israel and quickened the people into life.

But the heat of a first enthusiasm necessarily cooled down when the political crisis and other conditions which had produced it passed away, and in time these old prophetic schools crystallized into a professional caste, a kind of state church, little differing from the priestly corporation of a later day. They became a regularly organized and recognized body supposed to be Jehovah's representatives, enjoying royal favour and patronage, the appointed official organs of God's communications to His chosen people. The contrast between a Nathan, Elijah or Elisha and the professional prophets of this later period is a sad picture. All the spirit, independence, and inspiration have evaporated. "It has always been the evil fate of the Hebrews to destroy their own highest ideals by attempting to translate them into set forms." This is exactly what happened with the prophetic schools. Their old rôle of national teachers, rebukers of wrong, awakeners of the slumbering national conscience was gone. They were now merely the champions and teachers of the low traditional orthodoxy of their day: no better and no worse than the average Hebrews around them. They were quite content to enforce a conventional code of morals, to follow a certain routine of religious ritual, to quote glibly in and out of season certain religious formulas such

as were commonly accepted and which they knew by heart : all the while shutting their eyes to glaring national sins after the manner of a traditional state religion out of which all the quickening life and spirit have vanished. In 1 Kings xxii. we find four hundred of these professional prophets gathered round the court of Ahab and consulted by him and Jehoshaphat as the mouthpieces of God. Even Jehoshaphat is not satisfied with these royal courtiers and time-servers, for he asks, "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might inquire of him?" The reply of Ahab is unconsciously the most withering condemnation of this degenerate prophetic school, "There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, but I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."

With Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah—the new prophets—we enter upon an entirely new phase of prophecy. They were not a professional guild at all, but a special call direct from God came to them at a sudden and definite moment. "I was no prophet," says Amos of himself, "nor a prophet's son : but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycomore fruit : and the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel " (vii. 14 sq.). It was, he tells us, a call which could no more be resisted than a man can avoid an instinctive shudder when a lion roars at his side. "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? The Lord hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" (iii. 8). The

most striking witness to the uncontrollable impulse to prophesy, the compulsion to prophesy whether the prophet likes it or not, is found in Jer. xx. He compares Jehovah to a hard task-master who has forced him, against his will (cf. xvii. 16), to enter on a work from which he shrank, and who has given him scorn and derision as his only wage. Similarly Hosea (i. 2), Isaiah (vi.), Ezekiel (i., ii.) each had a distinct call. The strong hand of the Lord was upon them. In each case, in S. Paul's language, "necessity was laid upon him, and woe betide him" if he disobeyed. We can well imagine, therefore, that these prophets were terribly in earnest, full of a white-heat fervour and enthusiasm.

We have seen that the older prophetic schools were well satisfied with the formal, lifeless, traditional religion of their day. All that Jehovah required was, in their eyes, a due performance of the proper sacrifices and ritual services as established at the recognized temples at Bethel and Gilgal. If it was desired to please Him still more, to draw the bond of union between Jehovah and His one chosen people Israel still closer, all that was needed was to redouble these solemn sacrifices and services. The new prophets flatly contradicted this plea, and plainly told prophets, priests, and people alike that God required righteousness and not sacrifice.

No better picture of the sharp contrast between the two can be drawn than that which the Bible itself gives us in the case of Amos, and we shall

quote it at some length as it is so eminently typical of them all.

In the reign of Jeroboam II., two years before a memorable earthquake, about 760 B.C., there suddenly enters the holy city of Bethel, the centre of these prophetic schools, a grim gaunt Judæan herdsman, Amos of Tekoa. With the most outspoken, uncompromising boldness, he denounces to their faces the wholesale rottenness and corruption of society, the vice, arrogance, and oppression of the upper classes, and pronounces all the religiousness of the day a hollow sham and an insult to Jehovah. It required no small courage for a common peasant shepherd of Judæa thus to enter Israelite territory, to beard prophets and priests in their own cathedral-city, the respected home of pure official state-recognized orthodoxy, and tell them, prophets, priests and crowd of worshippers alike, that their whole life and religion was radically wrong and hateful to God. You say, exclaims Amos, Jehovah is our God : us alone does He know of all nations of the earth : therefore He must be on our side : He has none but us : as His only children, provided we pay Him His dues in the way of sacrifices and services, He is in honour bound for His own sake and honour to protect and bless us. You fancy that mere performance of religious services is all the worship Jehovah requires, that sacrifices are all He asks of you. This is Jehovah's own answer : "I hate, I despise your feast-days : your burnt and meat offerings I will not

accept : your sacred songs and viols I will not hear. It is righteousness and judgment I look for " (Amos v. 21 sqq.). God is not a man thus to be bribed by gifts and offerings. Do you think Jehovah will spare you, simply because you are His chosen people, when you are guilty of vice, arrogance, oppression and wrong? "You only do I know," saith the Lord, "*therefore* will I visit upon you all your sins." Not a whit more will God spare you than He spares other nations that do wrong : indeed, He will spare you less, for to whom much is given, of him is much required, and, after all He has done for you, He turns away from you in disgust as from a defiling thing. God has not two standards of morality, one for you and one for other nations : with Him right is right, and wrong is wrong all the world over. What Jehovah demands is a right life, not mere orthodoxy and correct services, and costly sacrifices. He asks for righteousness, and nothing short of this will satisfy Him, for that is the one thing that matters in His eyes ; for its sake all other things exist, it is alone the essential thing in the world. What He loves is righteousness : what He hates is injustice. You come to Bethel, your sacred temple-city, and transgress : at Gilgal you multiply transgression : you bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes every three years : you offer sacrifices of thanksgiving. "Seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, saith the Lord. Seek ye Me, and ye shall live : ye who turn judgment to wormwood and leave off righteous-

ness in the earth." "Therefore the Lord hath sworn by His holiness that, lo, the days shall come upon you that He will take you away into captivity with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks." "Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nought" (Am. v. 4—8 ; iv. 2).

As a bolt from the blue falls Amos upon these self-satisfied prophets and worshippers, and to their pleasant hall of banquet and song he brings the discordant note of the house of mourning and lamentation. Well might the professional exponents of traditional orthodoxy, the ornamental figure-heads of respectable religionism, mock and jeer at him, and Amaziah the high-priest send a letter to the king accusing Amos of treason. "Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent to Jeroboam, the King of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel : the land is not able to bear all his words" (vii. 10). He also orders this ranting preacher to quit the realm. This Socialist agitator, he argues, might stir up the oppressed poor against their lords and masters. This revivalist, with his threats of judgment and his denunciations against orthodox religion, would shock and unsettle respectable church-goers. This moral reformer would make people believe something was radically wrong in the state of model Israel. The high-priest's words betray all the contempt of a high church official towards an interfering nobody, a mere sectarian ranter. "O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of

Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy" (vii. 12)—in other words, go elsewhere and ply thy trade of cheap mountebank, and earn a precarious livelihood with thy prophesyings; go to thy native Judah, we don't need thee here.

What we read in Amos is but repeated in Isaiah and Jeremiah: he is the type of the new prophets. Throughout the whole period there runs one constant refrain, "You only, O Israel, have I known . . . therefore I will punish you for all your sins" (Am. iii. 2). The Jehovah Whom these prophets know is a God merciful and loving, but, above all, righteous; a God Who will not favour His chosen people if they continue in their present evil ways; rather will He punish the sinful nation, Israel or any other, and especially Israel, because of the great spiritual privileges given it over any other nation.

Like Micaiah, the son of Imlah, and unlike the professional prophets, the new prophets did not prophesy good concerning Israel, but evil. How could they prophesy smooth and pleasant things? All their illusions had been dispelled. They saw Hebrew society rotten to the very core, "from the sole of the foot," says Isaiah, "even unto the head there is no soundness in it" (i. 6). Jehovah demands righteousness in a nation, nothing more and nothing less, and Israel has broken the bond between Jehovah and His chosen people by its awful sins. We have seen Amos' description of Judah, Hosea says exactly the same thing of the Jews of his day: They curse

and lie, murder, steal and commit adultery, and one bloody deed treads upon the heels of another. (Hos. iv. 2). Isaiah (iii. 8 sqq.) speaks of the shamelessness with which Israel, like Sodom, proclaims its sins without blush or concealment. Jeremiah (xiii. 23) declares the corruption to be so deep-rooted that the Ethiopian could more readily change his skin or the leopard his spots than the Israelites their evil habits. How could a righteous Jehovah wink at the unrighteousness of such a people as this? He could be Israel's God only in so far as in Israel the right was recognized and followed.

The impending doom pronounced upon the nation was not mere moralizing on the part of these prophets. God had opened their eyes to see in the world's history His guiding hand, to grasp the truth that Jehovah was the Moral Governor of the universe, everywhere overthrowing and triumphing over sin and wrong. In the Assyrian now knocking at Israel's gate they saw God's avenger at hand. As clearly as Daniel is said to have interpreted the mysterious writing on the Eastern palace-wall, so these prophets read the signs of the times, and to them one and all these were the words written by God Himself of Israel, "Thou hast been weighed in the balances and found wanting: thy days are numbered: thy kingdom is taken from thee and given to another." Of their nation's downfall they had not a shadow of a doubt: Israel was hopeless and beyond repentance. But their faith in Jehovah and His final purpose does

not waver for one instant. Israel must be purified of its dross as if by fire ; the whole fabric of its rotten society must be pulled down, but only to be built up again better and stronger. A new Israel must rise from the ashes of the old one. Amos and Hosea feel in their heart of hearts that this must be so. They have such implicit faith in Jehovah's mercy even though it is His righteous judgment they emphasize most. They know that His covenant and promises to Israel are everlasting and true. But the outlook to them is so black that they cannot see how this restoration, which is an article of their faith, is to be realized. Isaiah's hope of this new Jerusalem and new kingdom like unto David's is based on the remnant in Israel that remain true, the "holy seed" (Is. vi. 13). "In the pious and God-fearing souls who were still to be found in this Sodom of iniquity, he saw the threads, thin indeed yet sufficient, which formed the links between the Israel of the past and present and its better future. Jehovah's kingdom cannot perish even for a time" (Wellhausen). Jeremiah cannot even entertain the hope of a remnant. "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved" (Jer. viii. 20) ; in other words, in spite of Jehovah's long-suffering patience and chastening discipline, Israel is worse than ever, and to Jeremiah the future is a hopeless blank. All that is quite clear is that the whole nation is irretrievably doomed. But even he believes in a restoration : "I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places

whither I have driven you, saith the Lord ; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive" (Jer. xxix. 14).

Thus the prophet's idea of Jehovah is still as the God of Israel, but what a change has come over the meaning of this national phrase ! Jehovah is no longer the local God of a nation, a God Whose sphere of power begins and ends with the boundaries of His land or the fortunes of His people. The prophets burst these narrow local barriers of space and time, and sweep away all limitations to Jehovah's universal sway. For their own sake the heathen nations are now brought under His direct rule and protection and included in His plan of salvation. History, to these prophets, is an open page in which they clearly read God's handwriting. The whole scene is before their eyes as in a play. The nations are the actors ; Israel especially do they watch with bated breath and longing to prompt him. Each character is playing his part true to life. The prophets are the spectators ; they are in God's counsels, and know His invariable rule : right and truth must triumph, wrong and error must go to the wall, so they know how it will end long before the curtain drops.

The strange thing with these prophets is that, in spite of their extraordinary insight right into the heart of things, they cannot rid themselves entirely of the idea that it is with nations, not individuals, that God deals. They appeal to Israel, and to society generally, to mend their evil ways, but seldom to the

individual soul. Religion is not yet realized as a relationship between God and the individual man. Isaiah is the first to have some perception of this new truth, but it is not till the outlook for the nation is hopeless, that at last Jeremiah grasps this great ideal. "After these days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts. . . . And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, saying, Know the Lord ; *for they shall all know Me, from the least of them, unto the greatest of them,* saith the Lord " (Jer. xxxi. 33, 34).

It has been truly said that the Prophets, not the Law, must be taken as the starting-point in Hebrew history, but still far more true is it that the Prophets are the founders of spiritual religion in Israel. They represent the high-water mark of the Old Testament religion in its intense spirituality. If we wish to see this for ourselves we have only to read the prophetic writings of this period, e.g. Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Deuteronomy and the Books of Kings, together with many of the finest Psalms. There we see a Jehovah Who is a terrible avenger of man's backslidings, it is true, but He is, above all, long-suffering and of great kindness, full of love and tender mercy, our Father. Naturally, in the face of the rottenness and corruption of Israel at this time, great stress is laid on the fact that Jehovah is a righteous God, avenging injustice and oppression everywhere: a God Who requires obedience, and prefers mercy to sacrifice: Who wants no mere

formal service, for they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth, and the only sacrifice really acceptable in His sight is the willing offering of a true and contrite heart.

The prophets appeal to all that is noble in man, setting God's mercy, love, purity, righteousness and truth before men's eyes, urging them to copy and develope these graces in themselves, not out of constraint but readily because it is lovely and good, their own best good, and the only service truly acceptable to the Lord. "What doth the Lord require of thee but to love mercy, to do justly, and to walk humbly with thy God?" In the spirit of a S. Paul they demand that man's conduct and life shall be the outward expression of loving, grateful hearts, formed and guided by an inward sense of God's constant Presence with them, and a thankful remembrance of all His acts of mercy and love. They do not lay down hard and fast rules, they hint at no form of ritual, these have no place in their teaching. They preached living truths, inspiring principles, heartfelt worship. It remained for their formal, legal, literal successors, as ever, to destroy their highest ideals by translating them into set forms, to crystallize their truths into dogmas, their principles into laws, their worship into rules, thus sacrificing the freedom of the spirit to the bondage of the letter. The prophetic teaching is so real and spiritual, they have such a vivid realization of a living personal God present with and among them, their

religion is so much of the heart that they have already all but grasped the Christian ideal. It is their teaching which Christ so constantly takes up and reaffirms, setting His own seal to it, endorsing it, fulfilling it.

When we read their writings we wonder how it was that the people were not more moved and regenerated by it, quickened into new life; and yet we know it produced little or no effect. In times of great danger and trouble, especially when the enemy was knocking at the gate, priest and people feverishly turned to sacrifices and redoubled services in the temples. Isaiah tried to impress upon them that what God did require of them was not this, but to root out all idols and abominations from their hearts: Jehovah was not a God Who cared for offerings and oblations, or a mere religion of the lips; what He wanted was a thoroughgoing reformation of life and a casting away from them of their evil ways. But it was all in vain: his words fell on deaf ears and dull hearts. Under Isaiah's influence Hezekiah started a reform, but half-heartedly, though later on, Josiah did touch the public conscience. But it was one thing to touch the nation's conscience, quite another to change its heart and renew its life. Society was too far gone for repentance, it was rotten to the core. Even Isaiah, the most optimistic of the prophets, has to own of his countrymen who lie so near his heart: "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers,

children that are corrupters . . . the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it" (Is. i. 4 sqq.).

A few words may be said in conclusion on (1) Messianic prophecy ; (2) the human form in which the prophets still clothe God ; and (3) their idea of the after life.

(1) *Messianic prophecy*.—We have already seen that in all these prophets there was an implicit faith in the everlasting nature of God's covenant and promises to Israel, which always made them certain of a restoration of the kingdom in the dim future. Across their awful denunciation of impending doom there ever smiles an era of grace and divine compassion, a promise of better things to come. Beyond the darkness of the catastrophe which they see is bound to come, there is always a clear gleam of light, the dawning of a bright day ushering in a golden age of prosperity, peace and joy. One and all, the prophets expected the full restoration of the kingdom to Israel after the nation should have passed through the fiery ordeal of purifying judgment and punishment for its sins (Isaiah i. 26, Deut. xxx. 3—10). Amos ix. 11 foretells this new and better Davidic kingdom, so does Hosea (iii. 5) ; especially does Isaiah (ix. 6 sq., xi. 4) connect the salvation of Israel with the rise of a Davidic king, full of Jehovah's Spirit. Indeed Isaiah ix. 6, 7, and Micah v. 2, picture this coming King in such ideal colours

(cf. Is. xi. 2) that many will not see in them anything but Messianic prophecies. Jeremiah xxiii. 5 and xxx. 9, in the same vein speak of the righteous Branch which the Lord shall raise unto David, and Ezekiel uses similar language (Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24, xxxvii. 24).

The prophets' descriptions of this glorious day, this golden year when the new and better Davidic kingdom is restored to Israel, are so full of Oriental poetry, word-pictures and hyperbole that they have often been seized upon as clear cases of Messianic prophecy. There are undoubtedly *some* purely Messianic prophecies, clearly pointing to the person and earthly life of Jesus Christ, the authenticity of which is unassailable, but they are very much fewer than are generally taught. Nowadays we can give, and rightly give, a Messianic interpretation to many of these prophetic visions of the coming David, but we must not go further and say that the prophets themselves had a full vision of the Messianic application of their words. They had not. "I heard but I understood not," says Daniel; and Zechariah, when asked "Knowest thou what these things are?" has candidly to answer, "No, my Lord." 1 St. Peter (i. 10 sqq.) openly tells us that in their Messianic prophecies the prophets did *not* grasp the full import of their message. Almost all prophecies have a twofold application, one near at hand, the other afar off. Thus our Lord's prediction of the Last Day refers primarily to the impending destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and

this at once is made suggestive of the end of the world myriads of years later. Christ consciously saw and meant *both* events in His word-picture, but the prophets only saw and meant the fulfilment of their prophecies in the actual restoration of the Davidic kingdom here on earth, which they hoped would be very soon. They did not grasp the second and greater fulfilment of their words in One Who was to come seven or eight hundred years later. God saw further than they did, and *made them say more than they knew*.

The prophets—and we must lay stress on this—were not nearly so predictive, foretellers of future events, as we are apt to fancy. This was not their work or aim^a. They were essentially readers of the signs of the times. They saw clearly as in an open book God's hand in contemporary history, and interpreted it to their fellows. Where the mass of the people only saw in the invasions of Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians bursting in upon them, powers of darkness swoopingⁿ upon Jehovah's Israel and sacrilegiously overthrowing all that was holiest, the prophets saw in these foreign foes simply instruments in God's hand to stamp out delusion and wrong. With their clear insight into the plan and ways of God as a righteous moral Governor of the world, the champion of right and truth, the avenger of wrong,

^a *Prophet* means "one who speaks the word of God,"—primarily as a moral and religious teacher,—a preacher (Jer. xxvi. 15 ; xviii. 18). The predictive element in prophecy is quite secondary.

all history past, present, and future was but as the acts of a drama which was unfolding itself before their eyes ; they saw its inner meaning and watched it intelligently, knowing all the while how it would and must end.

We must not therefore look for direct Messianic prophecies in the prophets before the Captivity. They are not there, as we understand them ; though their pictures of a golden year coming, with a perfect God-inspired Davidic king, clearly bear a Messianic interpretation. In this world, and in the new and better kingdom of Israel *on earth* their hopes were centred. It is not till the Captivity has annihilated Israel politically as a nation, and all earthly hopes of its restoration have been blasted, that we really do find clear and unmistakable pictures of a Messiah. Such is the great picture, perhaps, of the second Isaiah (xl.—lxvi.), and parts of Joel, Malachi, and Zechariah ix. But it is not really till we get outside the canon of Holy Scripture and come to apocalyptic literature that we get the full development of the idea of a Messiah ; though it had been realized long before that the Davidic king was not a human but an ideal person.

(2) *Anthropomorphism*. — Surprise has been expressed by some scholars that, with their sublime spiritual conception of Jehovah, the prophets still speak of Him as if He were a human Person. But how was this to be avoided if they were to give men a true living picture of a Personal God ? The

prophets knew as well as we do that God is not in human form with eyes, ears, hands and feet, but they speak not in the precise and scientific language of a theological school, rather with the warmth of heart and intensity of feeling of practical religious preachers. It is impossible to convey to the human heart a portrait of a loving Father in Heaven without speaking of Him as we would of an earthly human father. Theologians have tried to emphasize the purely spiritual and transcendental nature of God by defining Him in terms which eliminate all human attributes, and with what result? They have simply given us a stiff, lifeless, philosophic abstract conception of God, mostly utterly unintelligible, as thin and unsubstantial as air, a God that does not touch or appeal to us in the very least. How infinitely more inspiring and helpful is the living picture of God set before us by prophets and Psalmists: the portrait of a Father Who loves His children, though He hates their sins: Whose eyes are ever open to our needs, and His ears ever attentive to our prayers: Who lays bare His arm, and with a mighty hand delivers His people: Whose eyelids try the children of men: a God seated on His throne in Heaven, and with earth as His footstool: a Lord full of mercy and loving-kindness Who is afflicted in the affliction of His children, and in His love and pity redeems them; though at times His anger is kindled as a fire at their awful sins, and then He repents of the good wherewith He said He would benefit them. This is the vivid way in which the prophets speak of

God, and in no wise do they lessen His glory, though, of course, there is ever the risk that the uneducated and unspiritual may think of the Lord as even such an one as themselves. Scripture is not blind to the fact that the human portraiture may be pushed too far, "God is not a man that He should lie : neither the son of man that He should repent." The risk is there, but the wise and devout man knows that it is thanks to these anthropomorphisms that prophet and psalmist alike give us such a vivid inspiring idea of the living God. Nowhere else, except in the words of Jesus Himself, are we brought so directly into the actual Presence of the Lord, a God as inexpressibly lofty and pure as He is near, and gracious, and tender.

(3) *Sheol*.—What also occasions surprise is that these sublime prophets, with their intense spiritual enlightenment, allow the old idea of Sheol with its featureless, lifeless, hopeless existence beyond the grave still to remain. There is not a trace in the prophets before the Exile of any real expectation of an actual, individual, active life after death, as we understand it. Rewards and punishments are still thought of as merely belonging to this life. The only idea of life after death is still the popular belief in Sheol, a dark, deep under-world in which the departed continue to exist, or rather vegetate in a state utterly devoid of joy, activity, or real life : where good and bad are hopelessly mixed together, forgotten of God and man. It is a wan, empty, shadowy, cheer-

less condition of things where there is no reward for the good, nor penalty for the wicked. So far as the prophets meditated over the life beyond the grave, they did so, not in the modern philosophic spirit, but simply as practical moral and religious thinkers. They had a dim vague instinct that somehow Righteousness is eternal and must prevail, but at the best this was only expressed, or rather hinted at, as a strong hope or aspiration,—nothing more. The business of the prophets was more concerned with the nation than with the individual, and this is reflected in their religious views. It sounds incredible to us, but it is a fact, that till Jeremiah for the first time in Hebrew history (Jer. xxxi. 33 sq.) is compelled to own that religion is a relationship between God and the individual man, the love of God for each single soul,—little account had been taken of the individual. Over him had the wheel of destiny remorselessly rolled till then, for it was an article of faith that God dealt mainly with families and nations; in their career good or bad did the righteousness of Jehovah find scope for its display, the individual counted for little or nothing. Man lived on in his family and nation; in his children and in his people was to be seen the harvest of his virtues or his sins; in his family and nation his days were prolonged in the land. As for any other hope of immortality he had absolutely none, as we shall see in a special chapter on this subject. It was this that made childlessness such an affliction

in Hebrew eyes. It was therefore the bounden duty of a brother, if his brother died childless, to marry his brother's widow and raise seed unto him, so as to save his brother's name from annihilation. Thus only could the dead man prolong his days in the land, and his memory not be clean blotted out (Deut. xxv. 5—10). It is this fixed idea that man is judged and rewarded, not after death, where all men are alike, but here on earth,—it is this which alone explains why Hebrew religion could so long dispense with the idea of heaven and hell.

^{*}*Prophetic writings, with dates based mainly on Professor Driver's Introduction^b.*

Eighth century B.C. : Amos (760—746 B.C.) : Hosea (721 marks Israel's Captivity) (746—734) : Zechariah (only chapters ix.—xi., rest of much later date) : Isaiah (1st) (750—700) : Micah.

Seventh century : Judges and Samuel (composed from older documents of tenth—ninth century) : Nahum (664—607) : Zephaniah (639—621) : Jeremiah (600) : Deuteronomy.

Sixth century : Habakkuk (608—598) : Jeremiah (overlaps into this period), 1 and 2 Kings (sources much earlier) : Lamentations : Obadiah :

^b Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible.

(586 marks year of Exile) Isaiah (2nd) : Ezekiel (586—536) ; Haggai (520) : Zechariah (chapters i.—viii.) : Priestly Group of Hexateuch.

Fifth century B.C. : Joel (after Captivity) : Jonah : Zechariah (xii. — xiv) : Malachi (432) : Ezra : Nehemiah : (the *memoirs only* of Ezra and Nehemiah, afterward incorporated in their present form). *

Fourth century : 1 and 2 Chronicles : Ezra and Nehemiah (in their present form) shortly after 332.

Second century : Daniel.

Note.—The Psalms belong to most of these periods, including even the Maccabean (168—165 B.C.), but chiefly to the exilic and post-exilic times.

CHAPTER XV.

PROPHETS OF THE PERIOD OF THE CAPTIVITY AND AFTER.

THE history of Israel's religion during the Captivity, and after the return of the Exiles, is one of the most interesting chapters in the Bible. It is full of the strangest contradictions. On the one hand it is a time of painful attention to the literal observance of the law; so much stress is laid on a punctilious performance of specified ritual and ceremonial acts, such an exaggerated value attaches to Temple, priests and sacrifices, that heart-religion and true morality seem to possess no importance at all and to recede into the background. On the other hand, in spite of this falling away from the high, pure, spiritual level of the older prophetic teaching, many of the Psalms written at this period (e.g., i., xix., cxix.), and such books as Job and Lamentations, for instance, show what an intensely good and inwardly religious life might be developed alongside of and under this rule of the Law; what a helpful guide it could be to real piety and rightness of life; a real channel of true spiritual joy and edification. Jeremiah's great discovery and revelation of the intimate relationship between God and the individual soul,—“I will write My law in their hearts, and they shall know Me from the least of them unto the

greatest of them,"—is bearing rich fruit. Never before had the individual so keenly felt his responsibility for all that he did or left undone. It was a responsibility that awed and oppressed him in post-exile days. He came back from his Exile so eager to obey and conform to God's requirements, that he craved for guidance in the shape of positive commands to fence in every action of his life, so that he should not possibly make a mistake. The Priestly Code promulgated by Ezra the scribe just supplied this want. Formal, lifeless, purely external as it seems to us, it had its mission, and an important one, to perform in its day ; it was the "schoolmaster to bring men to Christ " (Gal. iii. 24).

We are apt to judge the Law harshly because of our Lord's denunciation of the slavish adherence to the letter, the ignoring of its true underlying spirit which was the rule in His day. But this tendency had only fully sprung up in the last two centuries before Christ. It was itself due to religious zeal, a desire to appease God's anger as manifested in the horrors perpetrated by Antiochus Epiphanes (168 B.C.) when the Temple was defiled. Clearly, thought the Jews, God required even a stricter, more literal fulfilment of the Law than before ; so the already heavy burden of the Law was increased by oral traditions, and still more minute rules. But these increasing regulations were felt not as burdens but reliefs, so anxious was the Jew not to incur any defilement, so eager at every moment of his life to order his every

action by sacred rules which should raise him above all risk of a mistake, and, therefore, of guilt in God's eyes.

More than this, not only do we now see for the first time the rise of personal religion in Israel, formal and stilted as it may seem to us, but during this period the barriers of a local national religion are completely broken down, and the foundation laid for a world-wide universal religion. Signs of this had been visible in the older prophets, such as Isaiah ; but it is not till we come to the "Great Unknown" prophet, the second Isaiah, that the old idea of the national God, Jehovah, Who has His eye upon Israel alone, utterly vanishes. Henceforth God's salvation has for its object the whole world of nations. Israel is only God's chosen people because through it Jehovah wills to accomplish the salvation of the whole world (Is. xlii., xlix.). Israel is Jehovah's "Servant" who, in accordance with His eternal purpose, is to expiate through its sufferings not only its own guilt, but that of the heathen world (Is. i. and lii.). God is already calling to all the ends of the earth to turn to Him and be saved, so that every knee shall bow to Him alone ; and Israel His servant is to be God's instrument in achieving this salvation.—It is the most profound revelation in the Old Testament ; and we can see the second Isaiah's influence in this direction in the teaching of all succeeding prophets. Malachi (i. 11) even goes so far as to say that the incense-offerings and pure gifts, which from the rising to the

setting of the sun are offered on their altars by the Gentiles, are strictly speaking, though they know it not, offered unto the name of God.

We have been anticipating what follows, but at the outset we wished to show that the very depreciatory judgments so constantly passed upon this post-exile period, with its painfully slavish adherence to the Law, are not altogether justified. True, it is essentially the sovereignty of the Law that is its predominating feature, but we must not forget that this was purely due to excess (mistaken, it may be) of religious zeal, and that this period sowed the seeds of personal religion, and ushers in the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's plan of salvation.

We shall now proceed to trace the course of events which led to the promulgation of the Law, in the form of the Priestly Code, as the basis of Israel's religion. This Code seems, at first sight, such a distinct downgrade movement from the lofty, all but Christian spiritual truths and principles of the older prophets, but it was not really so. Experience had proved that the Jews were not yet ready for the prophets' spiritual teaching; it was too high for them. They could neither grasp it nor live up to it. The best teaching was beyond them, something less perfect was needed. The appeal to the heart and the noblest instincts of humanity would not do; "because of the hardness of their hearts," this must be replaced by the discipline of the Law. We have Christ's own word for this fact (Matt. xix. 8). Israel was not yet

ripe for spiritual principles, they must be guided by definite precise rules and precepts telling them exactly, in set terms, what to do and what not to do in their service of God, and in their ordinary daily life with its relations to their fellow-men. Even in Isaiah's day we see clear traces of this tendency. He unwittingly paved the way for the later ecclesiastical community of the Priestly Code after the Exile.

Isaiah was so convinced that Assyria was the hammer in God's hand, or Jehovah's rod which he wielded in chastisement over the nations, that he deprecated revolt against Assyria as a rebellion against Jehovah Himself. Judah, as a tributary of Assyria, enjoyed peace and prosperity, and this was as it should be. "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength" was Isaiah's constant message to Judah from Jehovah. King and people were urged to leave politics alone, and devote themselves to internal reforms, especially in matters of worship. Under the influence of Isaiah, Hezekiah undertook this important reform: "He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan." Hezekiah also purified and refurnished the Temple, renewed the old sacrifices with great magnificence and pomp, and celebrated the long neglected Passover, besides purging the land of idolatry.

All this was as it should be, but Isaiah, by his policy

of urging upon king and people non-interference with politics, and preaching a reform in worship and a crusade against idolatry, was unconsciously labouring towards a goal which he could hardly foresee. He was transforming the nation into an ecclesiastical state, a Church. The impressive and glorious defeat of Sennacherib's huge host, shortly after, by a miraculous disaster, (still shrouded in mystery), was naturally associated in people's minds with these worship-reforms, and impressed the Jews with the fixed conviction that with such external reforms Jehovah was well pleased. Thus even in Isaiah's day and under his influence were taken the first steps towards the institution of a Church-state, into which we see it transformed after the Exile. In Isaiah's day also began the centralization of national worship in Jerusalem which first gave the priests of the Temple such power and eventually led to the Priestly Code.

This naturally paved the way for Josiah's still more radical and drastic reform in the next century. Hezekiah had spared those local sanctuaries where Jehovah was truly worshipped ; Josiah abolished them one and all. There was henceforth to be one Temple as there was One God. The worship of Jehovah was limited to Jerusalem. This enormously enhanced the prestige of the Temple and, therefore, of its priests, for their provincial rivals were now degraded into mere Levites, without the rights of priests. More than this, very soon the high priest Hilkiah announced to Shaphan the scribe that he had found

the Book of the Law in the Temple (621 B.C.). This was either the Book of Deuteronomy itself, or one based on exactly the same principles. Shaphan read it, and informed the king of the discovery. The elders and people of Judah were at once summoned by the king to hear it publicly read. Josiah and the assembled Jews were so awed at the Divine threats therein made against disobedience to God's commands, so conscious that they themselves had thus offended against God's Law, that they set about radical reforms, and there and then made a solemn covenant with God to obey His statutes. The Book of the Law was henceforth to be the authorized law of the land.

For years after, till Josiah's death, Judah lived in peace and prosperity. It seemed as if at last Jehovah were appeased,—again by a worship-reform and a Church Law,—and once more pleased with His people. Jeremiah, like the prophets before him, tried to open the nation's eyes to the fact that mere external reforms of this kind were useless. He plainly told the Jews that a mere momentary awakening of the national conscience, spasmodic impulsive efforts at worship-reform, and abundance of services and sacrifices were not what Jehovah required. God asked for a complete change of heart, and a regenerated social and individual life. Jehovah was not a man to be bribed thus by mere superficial outward reforms and the redoubling of solemn services and sacrifices.

For such plain honest outspokenness, not at all to the liking of priests, professional prophets, or people,

Jeremiah was all but put to death as a blasphemer ; but events proved him a true prophet. In 586 B.C. Judah went into captivity, in spite of this worship-reformation, and in spite of the new Law and the limitation of God's worship to His one true Temple at Jerusalem.

Of the Jews' history in Babylon we know but little. They seem to have been well treated, to have had houses and gardens of their own, their own communities, and elders of their own, till seditious prophets provoked their masters to treat them rather more harshly. Naturally, at first there was great bitterness, depression, and groaning. "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion" (Ps. cxxxvii.). They felt Jehovah had cancelled His covenant : there was no Temple ; no feasts could be held or sacrifices performed : it was one long fast and humiliation. But their prophets at this time cheered them with words of hope and comfort. Even Jeremiah is optimistic now : "Build ye houses, and dwell in them ; and plant gardens : take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters, that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. For thus saith the Lord, After seventy years are accomplished I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place." The second Isaiah is more full of cheerful comforting words than ever : "Away with your sorrow ; comfort ye, My people ; Babylon is My rod awhile for your good, and Cyrus is My Shepherd, My anointed through whom I shall deliver you, and build up Jerusalem, and lay the

foundation of My Temple ; for thy trouble is over, and thine iniquity pardoned : can a woman forget her sucking child ? Yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee " (x. ; xl. 1, 2 ; xlix., *paraphrased*).

That the lot of the Jews was not so very bad in Babylon may be readily inferred from the fact that when permission was given them to return to their land in 522 B.C., under Zerubbabel, only 42,000 availed themselves of the privilege. Great things were expected of these returned exiles, but it proved an illusion, for they merely paid Jerusalem a passing visit, and went every one to his own city, and allowed God's House to go to waste. It is not till 458 B.C. that anything worth noting takes place. In that year Ezra the scribe, a man of high-priestly family, with a large number of his fellow-countrymen, came to Jerusalem, armed with large powers, in the Babylonian king's name. For a long time he did very little. He found things in a sad state. Even men of high-priestly family had taken foreign wives. Laxity and moral abuses were so rife in Jerusalem, that Ezra could find time to deal with little else but setting these things in order.

Fortunately he was reinforced in 445 B.C. by a Jew layman enjoying high favour at the Persian court, who came attended by a regular escort of troops. This was Nehemiah, who saw eye to eye with Ezra the scribe in all religious matters. After rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, restoring order and discipline, and settling things generally

with vigour and success, Nehemiah proceeded with the introduction of the new Book of the Law written by Ezra the scribe.

All the people were gathered together on the first day of Tisri, at Jerusalem, to hear this Book of the Law read. For days it was read and explained, and then the whole community bound itself solemnly to obey it. It was the so-called Books of Moses, to which had been added the new Books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers recently composed by Ezra the scribe. Deuteronomy had been already included in it in 621 B.C.; now the Priestly Code was introduced into it, and henceforth formed the basis of religion. It practically became the Magna Charta of Judaism from this day onwards. The Temple at Jerusalem is henceforth the national centre; the nation is transformed into an ecclesiastical community or Church; the high-priest now takes the place of the king, the Jerusalem priests are his peers; the whole community is governed by Church Law, that is to say the Priestly Code, and all civil and ordinary life has to be strictly regulated by it. The Priestly Code enters into every possible relation of life, and everything is regarded from a purely Church standpoint. Even such prophets as Haggai and Zechariah make people believe that the one condition of God's blessing Israel depends upon their rebuilding of the Temple (Hag. i. 4; Zech. viii. 9). The greatest emphasis is laid upon that strict outward observance of the Sabbath which so grieved Christ, and immense importance is attached

to prescribed food and drink offerings (Joel i. 9, 13, 16 ; ii. 14). An exaggerated value is attached to Temple, priests, ritual, fasts and feasts, New Moons, Sabbaths, even the cooking-pots of the Temple. Endless minute precepts of purification and propitiation for every conceivable case are now prescribed by Law as the only means of satisfying God's requirements. Neglect of these rules, even if wholly unconscious and unintentional, is mortal sin !

So as to make the people well acquainted with this new Law, and give it practical effect, it was read every Sabbath day in the synagogues. It is more than probable that meetings on the Sabbath day for united worship first came into use in Babylon ; certainly synagogues first arose there. Amongst the exiles torn from their homes and from their Temple, with its worship and sacrifices, the need for Sabbath observance and synagogues must have made itself keenly felt ; and the tradition of the Jews is that God there gave them the synagogue as a compensation for the loss of their sanctuary. On their return to their homes these were established all over the country. Thus the new Law could be made known and explained to the people everywhere.

The principles on which the Priestly Code are based are exceedingly simple. They practically resolve themselves into this one idea that everything in Israel, all the people, all the land, all the people's goods, and their time, and their life, everything without exception that belongs to Jehovah's chosen

Israel, is God's own, and consecrated to Him. But God does not exact His full due. On condition that a portion of each is set apart for Him and for Him only, He is satisfied; and, for the sake of this portion willingly offered to Him, His blessing is upon all the rest.

- (a) All places are Jehovah's; but if one place is strictly marked off as hallowed for His special dwelling-place, and certain specified cities set apart for His own servants, the priests and Levites who wait upon him, Jehovah is well pleased with that. The rest of the land is in consequence hallowed, and its safe enjoyment secured to Israel. Hence we have the Temple at Jerusalem for Jehovah's own "glory," and the thirteen priestly and thirty-five Levitical cities.
- (b) All time is Jehovah's; but in the same way He is satisfied provided one day is hallowed in every seven; a Sabbatical year set apart once in every seven years; and an extra and greater Sabbatical year once in every seven Sabbatical years (Jubilee), besides certain specified Fasts and Feasts.
- (c) All Israelites are holy and priests unto the Lord; but He is content if a portion of the holy nation is set apart for Him in the persons of Priests and Levites. Jehovah, however, insists that His priests shall be very pure and spotless, so as to approach Him and present

Israel's offerings acceptably and without blame ; especially so in the case of the high-priest who alone can come nearest to God in His Holy of Holies.

- (d) All property is Jehovah's ; but if the first-fruits of the land and cattle are first duly offered to Him, the rest is hallowed for Israel's use ; on condition also that the people faithfully pay their lawful dues or tithes to Jehovah's chosen servants, the priests and other attendants of His Holy Temple.
- (e) In all cases of sin the sinner's life is forfeit to Jehovah ; but here again He is content with a penitent heart, provided it is accompanied by its acknowledgment of the forfeiture of the sinner's life in the shape of a sacrificed animal. "Without shedding of blood is no remission."

As already suggested, this Priestly Code of Holiness has great virtues and great drawbacks. The principle underlying it, the fundamental idea of a people whose lives, time and all their belongings are absolutely hallowed unto Jehovah is a great one ; though it is perfectly true that the systematized formal method adopted to carry it out into actual daily practice, a mere routine of external ceremonial observances, is a plan which experience has proved to be doomed to failure. The routine, excellent as its original aim and intention may be, inevitably degenerates into a mere hollow dead form. Meant

to be helpful, rules of holy living become a snare gratifying our petty pride and making us feel that we have done exactly what we should have done. Again and again, in modern days as well as of old, men have thus tried to produce spiritual life in themselves by compulsion from without. They fast a little, punctiliously perform their religious duties, and practise small austerities; and then, refreshed by these exercises, and satisfied with their consciences, sin just as before, rejoicing that they can so easily make God and the world go hand in hand. Religious observances of every kind must be the natural expression of the heart, or else, being untrue, they produce habitual hypocrisy. Rigid in observation of *rule*, men who are thus wedded even to the most pious observances, fail utterly in the long run in the cultivation of the spirit, the temper that underlies these rules, which alone is essential. This is exactly what happened in Hebrew religion under this code of Holiness. "The Law in the hands of the Pharisees became a Procrustean bed upon which the mind of the nation was to be stretched or maimed, according to the requirements and interpretations of the scribes; it became more and more hardened into a lifeless theological creed, clothed in a web of ceremonial formalities, and under it a Jew was not allowed to be religious or even virtuous after his own fashion" (Abbot, "Israel in Europe"). Under this code moral and ritual offences were placed on the same level; for example, any one who made such sacred oil as the

priests used, or ate any sacrificial meat on the third day after sacrifice, when it should be burnt with fire if any remained, was treated in exactly the same way as if he had committed incest, sodomy, or murder,—and contact with a corpse or a leper needed purification from *sin*.

But these necessary evil accompaniments of such a formal Code as the Priestly Law of Holiness must not blind us to its many virtues. It was undoubtedly the expression of a deep religious earnestness. The Jews came back from Captivity vastly improved and purified by the fiery ordeal of punishment through which they had just passed, determined to obey God's Law, craving for positive guidance in its statutes, and this laudable and godly desire crystallized itself in this code. Never before had the individual so keenly felt his personal responsibility for all that he did or left undone, and what he longed for was for some strict rules to fence his duties round at every moment of his life, and make their performance sure. He, therefore, gladly welcomed these many positive commands, which raised him above all risk of mistake, as a relief and not a burden.

More than this, as S. Paul (Gal. iii. 24) expressly states, "the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ," and we can see how true this is. With its many definitions of what constitutes acts abominable in God's eyes, it enforced and deepened men's sense of sin, and declared the need of

restoration and forgiveness. Its many sacrifices clearly insisting that "without shedding of blood there is no remission," prepared men's hearts for Christ's great sacrifice which is the propitiation for the sins of all mankind.

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As Lightfoot has shown, our Authorized Version mistranslates S. Paul's words in Gal. iii. 24, which really mean, not that "the Law is our schoolmaster leading us unto Christ," but, "until Christ came"; still, as S. Paul clearly shows, this Priestly Code was an absolutely essential factor in Israel's spiritual life and development. The "schoolmaster" he speaks of was a slave who conducted a boy to school, and naturally had to exercise a certain amount of control and moral restraint over the boy under his charge. Similarly, the law also was doing menial work; it was a very inferior type of religion,—"given for the hardness of men's hearts," says our Lord. But it leads men to the higher school of Christ, for it awakens the bad conscience to a sense of its guilt. It insists on duties to be done, rules to be obeyed, principles to be maintained, and stamps neglect of any of these as sin against God. Thus it begins to educate man's moral sense, convict him of sin, press upon him the need of pardon, but it can do no more: there it stops. All the same it has paved the way for Christ.

Once more, it is true that there is little of true spiritual teaching in the Priestly Code, but this is easily explained. The very men who give us this

Priestly Code had also collected all the existing Scriptural books of the Jews. They came back from Exile with no political future before them, but full of religious zeal and Messianic hopes. To obey the Law of Jehovah and await the coming Deliverer was the one aim of the new religious community. The whole concern of the nation from this time onward was to preserve the sacred heritage of their glorious past, and look hopefully to the still more glorious future. Ezra not only came back armed with a fresh message from the Lord, in this new Law of Moses ; he and his school gathered together the books of Law and the older prophets' writings, and some of the historical books. This Priestly Code was therefore only *one* of the parts of the Bible read every Sabbath day in the synagogues. The lofty inspiring teaching of Deuteronomy and the prophets with their heart-searching moral and spiritual demands, ever insisting on the recognition of God as a loving but righteous Father, and of men as our brethren, formed equally with the Priestly Code the Israelite's rule of life. It was thus less necessary for the new Code to lay stress on these moral and spiritual requirements, for they had long become, through the public and private reading of Isaiah, Amos, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the common possession of the people. In the case of the better portion of Israel this deep, inward, heart-felt spiritual life was part and parcel of their very being. It was living in flesh and blood, as many of the later Psalms abundantly attest. Indeed, when the

spirit of prophecy, long declining, expired with Malachi, its place was taken by these inspiring Psalmists who lived under the Law ; Psalmists ever prompting men to a deeper and freer individual piety of heart, a sense of that living fellowship with God which is man's highest good, and sufficient for him even when flesh and heart fail. It is in these Psalmists, living under the Law, that we find those aspirations after immortality which come nearest in the Old Testament to our idea of a life beyond the grave ; and it was they who elaborated a Temple service of song which soon reached an importance even higher than sacrifice.

From our modern Christian standpoint we may criticize the formal character of the Priestly Code, but we are too apt to forget the immense amount of good it has done ; the important part played by such rules of holy living at all times ; the immense revelation it actually was in its day ; the moral sense it developed ; the saintly lives it fostered ; its educative power as a "schoolmaster until Christ came." If we are to judge of the use of an institution by the abuse made of it, it will go hard with much that we ourselves hold very dear and sacred.

As to the conceptions of God entertained by the framers of this Priestly Code we can only judge from scattered passages, more especially the first chapter of Genesis with its account of the Creation. The writers of Gen. i. were not able to throw off all Babylonian ideas,—we have already seen this clearly in a former chapter : indeed much of the Priestly Code itself can

be traced to a Babylonian source ;—but the writers' idea of God in Gen. i. is so lofty that it almost goes beyond anything else to be found in the Old Testament. At God's mere word of command everything is evolved out of nothing. God's wisdom, as well as His omnipotence, is manifested by the fact that even He beholds all that He has made, and pronounces it very good. So sublime, transcendent and spiritual is the Priestly writer's conception of God's Person that he carefully avoids all possible approach to anything like anthropomorphism. He shrouds God in a halo of invisible and unapproachable glory, which he does not venture even to attempt to describe. This necessarily makes God less of a real living Person ; it appeals less strongly and warmly to our hearts than in the living word-pictures of the older prophets. Yet we cannot but appreciate the writer's reverent motive, and share his hallowed feeling of awe ; a feeling which pervades his writings throughout. All said and done, this Priestly writer is a man of God with whom we may not always be in sympathy, but honour and revere him we must.

Strange as it may sound, the Priestly Code was the natural outcome of the new prophecy as represented by Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. The new prophecy had been the destroyer of the old idea of Israel as the actual nation of Jehovah. The true Israel which these prophets preached and set before the people as their ideal was not the actual historical Israel at all, but ever tended more and more towards the purely

spiritual kingdom of God such as we find it in the New Testament. True, this actual idea of it never in so many words came within the prophets' horizon, but very nearly so at times. What they clearly saw and proclaimed all along was that Israel as a nation was rotten to the core, and its whole fabric must be dissolved before the new and better spiritual Israel could rise from its ruins. Amos and Hosea believed a real actual Israel of the Hebrews would rise from the ashes. Isaiah at times foresees a purely spiritual Israel consisting of all nations of the earth, but cannot grasp this idea fully, as a religion apart from a particular nation had in his day never been heard of. Jeremiah is the first to set the relationship between God and man free from all questions of nationality, and, for the first time in history, shows that it is a purely spiritual relationship between God and the individual soul. Henceforth what confronts us in the Old Testament is not the fortunes of Israel as a nation,—with the Captivity this has gone, Israel's political existence is no more;—the great question now is how can the suffering of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked be shown to individual men to be in harmony with the ways and purposes of God: or "wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" in other words, the problem of personal religion. As a setting to the gem it contained, a scaffolding while the house was a-building, the nation had been necessary for awhile; now its work was done, and it was no longer wanted. It merely

made men look away from the kernel to the shell, the picture to the frame. What alone was valuable remained ; the new Israel could be trammelled and bound down to no nationality. So it is that Israel after the Captivity is no nation, but in the germ a spiritual Israel already, an ecclesiastical community. It is not meant to imply that the Jews viewed it as such ; very far from it. Even then, and especially then they arrogantly boasted that they alone were God's people. They believed themselves to be in league with the Creator of the Universe, and the mass of the people could not believe that their Jehovah could ever forsake *them* to be the God of mankind. In spite of periodical attempts by individual prophets and Rabbis to soar above the barriers of narrow nationalism, and to infuse their own noble spirit into the minds of their contemporaries, Jehovah, to the ordinary Jew, remained a purely national God, and the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, with all its earthly pomp and power as in David's days, was only a question of time. Even Christ's own disciples at the time of His death believed this (S. Luke xxiv. 21). But any reader and true interpreter of history can see after the Exile that Israel, as a nation, had ceased. The germ of the prophets' new spiritual Israel was already there visible in the ecclesiastical community of individuals each guided by Divine rule. Jeremiah's idea of a "nation in which God's law is written in each man's heart" is there, although the nation's horizon wants

much widening and spiritualizing before it becomes an accomplished fact.

In destroying the actual nation, the prophets also destroyed themselves. They were essentially national reformers, and there was now no nation to reform : besides, the power of reformers lies in attack, and naturally when once the reform they advocate is accomplished, their occupation is gone. This is precisely what happened, in a way, when Deuteronomy was made the authorized law of the land in 621 B.C. by Josiah.

During the Exile prophets were still wanted to cheer and comfort the people in their Captivity, to set forth assurance of speedy deliverance, and proclaim the new Israel's mission to spread the knowledge of the Lord to all nations. But with this last effort prophecy dies, and even Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi have little of the old prophetic fire, morally earnest as they undoubtedly are. As we have already hinted, after 430 B.C., the only problems discussed are the laws of the new society of faithful men who compose the true Israel of God, and how to hold fast to a faith in God, in spite of all seeming contradictions. The book of Job and the later Psalms are examples of what is meant.

We shall treat of these Holy Books, the Hagio-grapha, in our next chapter ; only one other prophet need be mentioned here, Daniel, for he is akin to the prophets proper, though in many respects so different from them as to require separate treatment. The

religious teaching of the old prophets was contained in their written books. It had also been embodied already in the Law and in the Psalms, and so become the common property of the nation ; but this did not satisfy all Israel's cravings. With grief the psalmist exclaims, " We see not our signs : there is no more any prophet : neither is there among us any that knoweth how long " (Ps. lxxiv. 9). In their anguish men's hearts were asking when God should visit and redeem His people. In the mass of still unfulfilled prophecies everywhere to be found in the prophetic writings, a vast amount of material was at hand on which to build their hopes afresh. By turning what was pure poetry into prose ; by transforming what was literal into figures of speech, and converting what was figure of speech into literal fact ; by subtle harmonizing and rearranging of this passage and that, they were able to use this mass of material in such a way as to map out the future according to their wishes, even in the matter of arriving at precise dates. They forgot that the prophetic pictures of an ideal future for Israel could not be literally fulfilled now that the nation had fallen, and ceased to be a nation at all. But all this fanciful and forced interpretation of prophecy was quite in the vein of later Judaism, and in some measure kept alive the hopes of the nation. In this manner we get a whole library of Apocalyptic literature dealing with vague anticipations of a golden age coming, when Messiah shall appear, a millennium shall be established, and all wrongs set

right. Ezekiel had already paved the way for this kind of prophecy, but Daniel in the Old Testament, and the Revelation of S. John in the New are the best scriptural types of what we find scattered broadcast in a more questionable form in the Hebrew literature of the two or three centuries B.C.

The Book of Daniel appeared during the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, and was meant to encourage patience and faith under terrible trial. The lessons of the fiery furnace and the lions' den would naturally show how God mightily and miraculously safeguards all who are faithful to Him, and would brace persecuted Israel to resist the proud worldly oppressor; while the visions of Messiah's approaching kingdom would console even those who utterly despaired of the present world. The special religious work of the book lies in the energy of undying faith, the conviction that God's cause is always the best and will prevail. The date of the book of Daniel cannot be earlier than the second century before the Christian era.

CHAPTER XVI.

HAGIOGRAPHHA OR "HOLY WRITINGS."

WE have now dealt with all the Old Testament in so far as it covers the Law and the Prophets, including the historical books: the only portion which remains is that entitled the Hagiographa, consisting of the following books: (the dates are mainly Prof. Driver's)^a :—

Song of Solomon tenth to ninth century B.C. (?)

Psalms belonging to every period from the eleventh to the first century B.C., but chiefly late in date, i.e., exilic and post-exilic.

Lamentations sixth century B.C.; *Job* late in sixth century; *Ruth* seventh century.

Proverbs sixth century (partly before and partly after the Exile).

Ecclesiastes (not earlier than latter years of Persian rule, ending 332 B.C.).

Esther (early years of Greek period, beginning 332 B.C., or third century).

The Books of the Hagiographa form a class of holy literature differing widely from the Law and the Prophets. They are a series of books

^a Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible.

which display a depth of personal reflexion, observation and aspiration such as characterizes the whole literature of the period of the Captivity and after. It has often been remarked that great national crises, times of intense struggle and excitement, naturally produce an outburst of literary activity, and Greece, England and Israel fully bear this out. Thus the terrible struggle with Nineveh and Babylon, when the Northern Kingdom perished and Judah seemed lost beyond hope, produced a wave of tense feeling which is clearly reflected in the fiery eloquence, the spiritual and intellectual brilliancy so indelibly stamped on the whole literature of the Assyrian and Chaldean periods. We have already seen this in the magnificent writings of the prophets, clear of vision when all were blinded, unshaken in their faith of ultimate victory, steadfastly and unfalteringly declaring God's great purpose of righteousness in language full of fire, beauty and power, culminating in such splendid passages as we so often find in the two Isaiahs, sometimes full of unrelieved sternness and sadness, oftener characterized by an exalted majestic repose. What language is adequate to the divine beauty of such passages as Handel linked to music almost as divine: "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God"; "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd"; "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet opened He not His mouth";—silver tones of which the ear is never weary?

The same influence can be traced in other directions; e.g. in psalms so exquisitely beautiful and spiritual, so yearning for a closer walk with God that never since have men found language more appropriate to express the inmost, deepest, truest feelings of their heart.

But the feature which chiefly characterizes the writings of the sixth century is the spirit of reflexion and deep meditation. This is the natural outcome of the individuality which resulted from the fall of the nation, and the realization that, after all, religion is a matter between God and each man's soul. For a time men were content with utterances that voiced thankfulness to God for mercies bestowed, with prayers for deliverance, help and guidance, but soon deeper problems confronted Hebrew saintly thinkers, and had to be faced. The problems of life opened up by the question of evil; the sufferings of the righteous; the apparent impunity of the wicked; the anxiety of doubt, or the half-bitter, half-cager cry of the seeker after truth who would believe, but cannot,—these ever more and more made their voice heard, and insisted on a reply. So it is that we now have the spiritual wrestlings of a Job, and the pessimistic half-incredulous scepticism of an Ecclesiastes in his darker hours. This subtle habit of reflexion not unmingled with pathos was the spirit of the sixth century, for all around the outlook was so black. Even a Jeremiah is much occupied with the dark problems of Providence, so is the second Isaiah.

Side by side with these philosophers stand another class of thinkers who also are the children of this reflective age: men who survey life from a purely practical point of view, not so much troubling themselves with deep metaphysical problems such as the origin of evil, or the prosperity of the wicked, but moralists who deal with life as it is. With keen scrutiny, shrewd common-sense, and a practical faith in God they bring their moral insight to bear on life in its various lights and shades, and show that the wise man is he whose life is orderly and well arranged,—the man who follows the Law of the Lord; while the fool is he who is self-willed and sinful. The foolish life lacks principle, and therefore unity, and is bound to be a failure in the long run: it is essentially self-corroding and destructive. The Book of Proverbs represents this class of moral reflexion, which is more or less prudential and utilitarian, subdued in enthusiasm, and not very inspiring or inspired.

We are too uncertain of the date of that graceful prose idyll, Ruth, to explain the circumstances which gave it birth; some have seen in it a political pamphlet, others merely a picture of a golden age. With the expiry of prophecy in 430 B.C., the age of religious literary productivity was past; the books of this period, such as Esther, have little literary or other merit.

When we come to examine these books of the *Hagiographa* individually and historically we shall

see that probably not one of them is really the work of the author to whom it is ascribed ; and yet it would be absolutely wrong to call this by the modern name of literary forgery. The anomaly is purely due to the habit of anonymous writing so common among the Jews, also to another feature in their literature which is almost unique. With the Hebrews there was no idea of what we call literary property: Moses was the Father of all laws, David of all religious lyrics, Solomon of all wisdom and proverbs. Consequently any legislator after Moses felt in duty and honour bound not to take to himself the credit of his own legislation, but to ascribe it all to the source of his legal inspiration, Moses. In the same way, all new psalms were assigned to David, all proverbs fathered on Solomon. This was done, not, as we may fancy, to give the weight or authority of Moses, David, or Solomon to the new productions,—it might have that effect as well,—but simply to give each of these great Founders his due. Each of these great names was regarded as fully entitled to receive all the credit for anything new discovered in his own particular line of thought: the new author counted for nothing.

More than this, it was considered not only right, but a tribute due to the memory and name of such a hallowed national hero and legislator as Moses, not merely to give him the credit of any new law, but deliberately to revise, modify or alter the original laws he had himself given, so as to bring them up

to the requirements of a later day : so too with the prophetic writings, and the historical books. This was done as a matter of course, and the new writers, editors or revisers, did not feel called upon to draw attention to the alterations. The question was not in what terms Moses or any prophet of old had spoken in former times, but whether the terms in which he had spoken were still fitted to fulfil the religious purpose which he had in view, and which he once meant to serve. If this did not seem to be the case, it was regarded as not only right, but a sacred duty to modify the original form of expression, to give a milder term to what was too harsh, to add what was lacking, so as to adapt the original to a differently constituted age.

Is it any wonder that Hebrews so often acted, honestly and conscientiously, in a way which we should now label with the hard name of forgery ? In our Psalter, for instance, there are only ten psalms or so which are really David's, yet they naturally ascribed the whole collection to him. In precisely the same fashion all wisdom-proverbs were set down to Solomon, all lamentations to Jeremiah, and even such very late productions as Deuteronomy and the Priestly Code were attributed to Moses.

Exactly the same thing was done with the prophetic writings. Thus a large portion of Isaiah (xl.—lxvi.) was composed by a later writer—a brilliant genius—steeped in visions of a golden age when the Servant of the Lord shall bring salvation to all the ends of

the earth. This glorious book, so full of consolation to dejected Israel, was appended to the original Isaiah,—though it was only composed during or even after the Exile,—so as to modify Isaiah's prophecies, and introduce new matter indispensable to a later age. The Jews had drunk to the very dregs the cup of God's righteous wrath, had suffered in their Captivity the heavy punishment predicted by the earlier canonical prophets, they were languishing in Exile or had only just returned from it; it would only have added to their sufferings to have let the words of the old pre-exile prophets, words breathing little but threats and punishment, remain as the sole or main feature in the prophetic writings.

The Jews were now keenly conscious of their old folly and really sorry and truly penitent; they were fired with a burning zeal to secure by painful and punctilious fulfilment of the law that great and improved change in their lot which the prophets had all along promised if the people would but mend their ways and turn to the Lord their God. Consequently, into the frame-work of Isaiah and the older Psalms new matter full of promise and consolation was now introduced. This process of interpolation also explains how it comes about that many so-called Messianic prophecies in Isaiah are hundreds of years later in date than the original Isaiah. There was comfort and consolation in Isaiah before, but not nearly so much as we now have in the book bearing his name; and the same thing holds good with other

prophetic writings. To call this literary forgery would certainly be a misnomer.

We shall now briefly review each book of the Hagiographa.

Psalms.—The Psalter was formed from psalms written at any time between 1000—160 B.C. In its present shape the book is the result of the grouping together of a number of previous small collections which had been gathered together under certain headings such as the "psalms of the sons of Korah"; "psalms of Asaph"; "songs of degrees." Though attributed to the great traditional Hebrew poet and musician, "it cannot be proved that David wrote any of the Psalms we now possess, but about ten are probably his, namely Pss. 3, 4, 7, 8, 15, 18, 23, 24, 32, and perhaps 102 and 110" (Davison). A few others may belong to the period before the Exile, but by far the majority were composed after the Captivity. Their use was as "Temple hymn-books," and they have formed men's devotional handbook for century after century. The Book of Psalms has been well called "The Prayer Book of a Christian man," and this in spite of the fact that they are full of national feeling and unmistakably Jewish, many of them written under political and other circumstances peculiar to the Hebrew race. Yet their significance is never exhausted; they echo every feeling of joy or sorrow, hope or fear, penitence and remorse, praise and thanksgiving; every single experience that the human soul can ever go through.

They are the living picture of the heart-feelings of holy men of old, sinful like ourselves, yet ever longing, yearning, praying for that which is noble, and pure and good. It is essentially a book of reflective devotion, and the whole of life is in it viewed from the point of view of the worship of God and a close walk with Him. God in the psalms is represented as a God full of mercy and loving-kindness; at the same time, upon those who work wickedness He is a righteous Jehovah Whose judgment falls severely and relentlessly. As God is the ideal whom man is to copy, the true follower of Jehovah so identifies himself with the cause of God that he too burns with anger against the wicked, and at times with all the intensity of Jewish hatred.

This to a very great extent explains those imprecatory psalms which seem to cast a dark shadow on this attractive picture; the passionate outbursts of resentment against their oppressors, the fierce joy over the destruction of hated enemies. The strong language of Pss. vii., xxxv., lxix., cix., cxxxvii. is not only natural on the lips of a people long-distressed, enslaved, maltreated; it expresses a righteous godly wrath against the powers of evil warring against God through oppressed Israel. "Against Thee do they make a covenant."

A great deal has been written on the Messianic character of the Psalms, but there are said to be only four (ii., lxxii., cx., cxxxii.) in which the evidence of expectation of a coming personal Messiah cannot well be disputed.

The Psalmists often face the question how the sufferings of the godly, and the prosperity of the wicked can be reconciled with a faith in a Divine Providence ruling the world in righteousness. The very first psalm states that the righteous alone are happy, while woe treads on the heels of the ungodly, and this idea is often repeated in the Psalter. But it was impossible to shut one's eyes to the glaring fact that this is not always the case in real life, so in Pss. xxxvii., xlix., lxxiii. the whole question is again subjected to a more searching examination, and the conclusion arrived at that the ungodly may flourish but "only for a time and his end is the grave."

Pss. xvii. 15, lxxiii. 24, xlix. 15, xvi. 9—11 go beyond this, and aspire to a life hereafter where the righteous will flourish in the presence of God, but it is only an aspiration. A gleam of hope and nothing more. Elsewhere throughout the Psalms (e.g., vi. 5, xxx. 9, xxxix. 13, lxxxviii. 10—13), it is just as we have found it hitherto in the Old Testament: "in death there is no remembrance of Thee: in Sheol who shall give Thee thanks?" "The dead cannot praise God." It is still, this land beyond the grave, a land of darkness, silence, and forgetfulness, a mere shadowy, lifeless, listless existence.

Proverbs.—In Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes we have the nearest approach to what may be called Hebrew philosophy, but in matters of thought the Hebrews cannot strictly be said to have had a philosophy at all. They realized that some things were too

high for them. They were by temperament indisposed to pure speculation, unfit to contemplate things as they are in themselves apart from their practical application to their own lives ; eager to reduce everything to a personal standard ; swift to seize on all that bears directly on the practical problems of life, and its right conduct. The philosopher casts the world as he finds it into the crucible of reason and makes it yield up its secret. The Hebrew thinker never does this. He takes two postulates as already granted, "God is" and "God's Law is." God's government of the world, and His rule of it according to certain definite moral laws are his first axioms to start with, and the actual facts of life are then made to fall into line with this creed which to the Jew admits of no question.

Thus there arose in Israel a class of thinkers and teachers called the "Wise," whose wisdom consisted in training men to a right ordering of life on the fixed basis of the fear of God, and a right understanding of the principles according to which Jehovah, as its moral Governor, ruled the world. The "Wise" were a class so well recognized in Israel that they could be ranked with priests and prophets as influential teachers in guiding men's actions and forming their opinions : "the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet" (Jer. xviii. 18). But they were not a special caste like the priests, neither had they a distinct vocation like the prophets. They were men gifted

with a keen moral insight, having at heart the welfare of the state and especially the moral soundness of its citizens. They were the nation's moral reprovers and counsellors, seeking to gain the ear of the young, and inculcate upon them the principles of right conduct. The one text on which they grounded all their teaching was, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." Their teaching ranged from mere proverbial philosophy, the mere commonplace theme that virtue and prosperity, wickedness and failure go hand in hand, right up to the sublime philosophy of the Book of Job, one of the finest and profoundest monuments of Hebrew literature, and the ripest fruit of the whole trend of Hebrew thought in this direction.

In Proverbs we have simply a collection of popular maxims based on the general assumption that virtue leads to worldly success and happiness, and they are counsels of a more or less prudential and utilitarian character. Constantly we hear the same refrains: "Piety is the most advantageous course and always successful": "Virtue is always rewarded": "Misfortune befalls only the ungodly": "Sin is folly." The fear of the Lord is to be the motive to a right life; but, by way of encouragement, great stress is laid on the fact that worldly prosperity is sure to follow such a course of right conduct: "Honour the Lord with thy substance, so shall thy barns be filled

with plenty, and thy fats shall overflow with new wine" (Prov. iii. 9. 10, R.V.). The writers of Proverbs had a shrewd knowledge of the world and men and life. Their wisdom here and there shows clear traces of cosmopolitanism, and does not err on the side of narrowness in worldly matters. It deals with a man's prudent attitude in his business and intercourse with inferiors and superiors; counselling men how to judge rightly and prudently every situation in which they may find themselves, and turn it to their best advantage. In their word-pictures of wisdom and folly in real life, sometimes these writers simply catch the expression of men good or bad, sketching their portrait in a few strong lines; more generally they pass a verdict upon their actions and thoughts, and urge their hearers to copy or avoid such examples. Some of the proverbs have a touch of humour, but their moral and religious aim is predominant. It is true that in Proverbs the higher side of spiritual religion, the idea of a kingdom of God, of a Messianic hope, of an Israel of God, and so forth, is conspicuously absent, but this is because the writers are purely moral educators and this is not their province. The law and the prophets deal amply with these spiritual conceptions; the wise man's concern is with the moral welfare and training of the people. As to the deep question, "Why do the wicked prosper, and the good suffer?" the authors of Proverbs had not apparently yet felt this great difficulty, and leave it untouched.

Job. The book of Job is undoubtedly the profoundest creation of Hebrew poetry, the finest exhibition of the problem of retribution we possess, on all its sides and in all its depth, viz., the question "Why do the wicked prosper, and the righteous suffer?" It was the author's purpose to widen men's views of the Providence of God. He wished to set before them a new view of suffering from a practical and religious standpoint, so as to inspire new conduct, new faith, new hopes, in the members of Israel's family, the people of God. It is not the speculation of a mere poet or thinker, it is essentially meant to save men from the despair, under trial, which borders on unbelief, and to deepen faith in the goodness and wisdom of God, Who makes of suffering a bright ministering angel sent to meet us on our way to strengthen and bless us. Job sees the shallowness of the popular theory that happiness is to the righteous, and woe to the wicked: and although he does not yet see more than a mere passing glimpse into a future life where all human wrongs will be set right, he sees that even here pain may be a privilege and not a punishment. To him suffering is a purifying stage: the loftiest spirits may have to pass through this ordeal as a trial of their godly loyalty rather than a chastisement for their sins. He recognizes that it is essentially good for the development of character: therefore, as a wise and loving God's chosen children, it behoves sufferers to bear the burden and the mystery of life patiently,

for it is pregnant with a deep significance certain to be made known even in this life.

Many see in Job xix. 25, "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth . . . in my flesh shall I see God," a clear proof of the author's belief in resurrection and immortality. But this view cannot well be borne out, as a mere glance at other passages will show :—

Job vii. 9. "He that goeth to the grave shall come up no more" (cf. xvi. 22).

x. 21, 22. "Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death: a land of darkness as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness."

xiv. 10 and 21. "Man dieth and wasteth away: man giveth up the ghost and where is he?" "A dead man's sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not: are brought low and he perceiveth it not," &c.

xxi. 26. The good and the bad "shall lie down alike in the dust, and worms cover them."

xxx. 23. "I know Thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living."

Each and all of these clearly point to Sheol, with its cheerless darkness, the complete isolation of its inmates from the upper world of the living, and the impossibility of any return from it. So it is all through Job, and this appears incompatible with the lofty view of resurrection and immortality. The hope of Job xix. 25 relates to this life : he looks for this manifestation of God to him while he is still alive, and he actually does see this hope realized on this side of the grave. Job xlii. 5 clearly proves it : "Then Job answered the Lord : I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but *now mine eye seeth Thee.*"

Ecclesiastes is a sad and saddening book, the work of a pessimist. If we were sure that Eccl. xi. 10—xii. were genuine, and from the pen of the writer of Ecclesiastes, it would alter the whole complexion of the case, for it would be an advance on anything that has gone before. Psalmists, wise men and prophets had tried to allay the prevailing scepticism in the moral government of God. They had declared that, although the righteous do seem often to have a bad time here, and the wicked apparently prosper, nevertheless the righteous do ultimately prosper, while the wicked are suddenly and miserably cut off, even in this life,—a view which Job had only confirmed. Actual experience, however, proved only too clearly that these hopes were not realized here on earth. In Eccl. xi. 10—xii. there is disclosed a new bar of judgment in the world to come, where all wrongs

will be set right by the righteous Judge of the quick and the dead, Who, on the Day of Judgment, will try the conduct of us all, and make us reap as we have sown.

Unfortunately this fine passage, Eccl. xi. 10—xii., probably forms no part of the work of the original writer, but is the addition of a later hand. We must therefore take the rest of the book on its own merits and judge it accordingly.

Perhaps the fairest way of judging Ecclesiastes is to briefly review the Preacher's own statements and analyse the contents of his book.

Life is a bad business at the best, "vanity of vanities, all is vanity"; man derives no profit from all his toil; everything in nature and man goes ceaselessly round and round in the same old monotonous groove, and, of the two, man is the worse off, for he soon dies, while nature and the earth abide for ever (i. 1—11). The pursuit of wisdom, pleasure, wealth, fame, is useless and unsatisfying, mere Dead Sea fruit that crumbles into dust: the best thing seems to be to eat, drink, and be merry (ii. 24—26; ix. 7—10), though even this is vanity. Fate rules all and man dies like a beast, "for thou goest to the grave where there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge" (iii. 1—15 and ix. 10). The simple life is perhaps, after all, best, "the sleep of a labouring man is sweet," though probably better still is it to be dead, or not to have been born at all (iv. 2, 3). "A good name is better than precious ointment, and

the day of death than the day of one's birth : and sorrow is better than laughter" (vii. 1—3). God may have a plan in this world, but it is past our finding out, "however much a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it" (viii. 17). "There is one event to all, be they good or bad ; the heart of the sons of men is full of evil and madness while they live, and after that they go to the dead." But Ecclesiastes thinks life may have some slight advantage, "for a living dog is better than a dead lion." Then follows a vivid picture of life after death in Sheol, where "the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward : for the memory of them is forgotten. As well their love, as their hatred and envy, is now perished : neither have they any more a portion in anything that is done under the sun" (ix. 3—6), "for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest" (ix. 10). Fate and chance rule the world between them, for in this world "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the men of understanding, nor success to the deserving." Make friends of the powerful and well-to-do, and be benevolent, as it may prove helpful in your time of need. Do your best and trust to chance, for nature is not kind. Life is sweet but short, and death and darkness are long, so enjoy yourself and make the most of your short life, especially in youth. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity (x., xi.).

If only we could add to this creed of Ecclesiastes the magnificent ending : " but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment " (xi. 9), and " Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth," &c. (xii. 1), " Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter : fear God and keep His commandments for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil " (xii. 13, 14) : how these few concluding verses would change this pessimism into a glorious faith ! All that goes before this epilogue would then have been only the clear exposition of the worldly cynic's creed so as to pulverize it with one single unanswerable plea, pricking the bubble and exposing it as the pretty but empty thing it is.—Men of such weight as Sanday and Robertson Smith endorse this view, but the consensus of modern scholarship is against it.

Is it any wonder that there is hardly any other book in the Bible which has suffered so much at the hands of commentators as Ecclesiastes ? It has been variously described as " an account of Solomon's repentance, to glorify God and strengthen his brethren," and " a meditation when he was irreligious and sceptical, during his amours and idolatry." One man sees in it " an exhortation to despise the world's pleasures, and flee to a hermit's cell," another that " it shows sensual gratifications to be men's chief blessings upon earth." Some declare that it proves

"the beautiful order of God's government upon earth," others "it shows that all is disorder and confusion, and the world is the sport of chance." One school of theology professes to find in it "a proof of the immortality of the soul," another emphatically asserts, "its design is to deny a future life."

Lamentations may be Jeremiah's, but the evidence is rather against his authorship. The dirges which make up the book are five in number, and the first four are alphabetical acrostics. Among the Hebrews this type of poetry was much cultivated (cf. Ps. 119), and reached great artistic perfection. *Lamentations* consists of carefully elaborated poems, in which every element of pity and terror is brought out with conscious art to stir up the minds of the hearers. Ewald suggests that these dirges were composed for a solemn act of mourning in which the captive or fugitive Israelites united; and we know that these poems ultimately took their place in the ritual of the great day of mourning, Ab the 9th^a. "*Lamentations*" was also used in the Temple-worship on fast-days.

The book starts with a picture of Zion's distress during a siege. Zion then herself takes up the wail, paints her own grievous sorrow, confesses the righteousness of Jehovah's anger because of national sin, and sees no hope of recovery save in tears, penitence of heart, and supplication to God.

^a "Old Testament for English Readers" (Ellicott).

But even this bitter affliction is a wholesome discipline ; it draws the singer's heart nearer to God, and, from the lowest pit of degradation and despair, he hears a voice saying, "Fear not." The last chapter takes the form of a prayer to God.

Ruth, as *Ruth* i. shows, consciously depicts a far-back age, full of primitive life and obsolete customs. It is a graceful prose idyll. The language, though not of the best classical period, places it shortly after the older canonical prophets. It is a gem of art : the author is an artist who takes evident delight in the pathetic and graceful details of his sweet idyllic picture. His aim is not to give us the historical facts of David's ancestry or to point a moral, but just to paint the charms of the simple life in the innocent pastoral days of old. Naomi, Ruth, Boaz, and the very harvesters are simple, kindly, God-fearing men, who impart to the scene the softening atmosphere of the gentle manners of olden days. The writer *may* have intended his story as an object lesson and wished to recall his countrymen to simplicity of life ; just as it is possible to see some purpose in the romantic marriage of Ruth and Boaz : but a work of such perfect art wants no moral to adorn the tale, it is an idyll pure and simple.

Esther from a religious and historical point of view is not of intrinsic value. The name of God is not mentioned once, a phenomenon quite unique in the Old Testament : as Ewald says, "in passing to *Esther* from the other books of the Bible we fall,

as it were, from heaven to earth." It was written in a worldly-wise age, when spiritual life was at a low ebb, mainly through much contact with heathen influences, especially Persian. It was only admitted into the Canon, even by the Jews, after much hesitation and questioning of heart, but it was soon popular with the Hebrews owing to its intensely patriotic spirit. The story of Esther at the Persian court professes to account for the origin of a Jewish feast, Purim, which was of a convivial nature and rested on no divine authority. The whole story bears on the face of it all the appearance of a historical romance, in spite of its life-like representation of Persian manners and customs. We can well understand how the picture of Esther's devotion to her oppressed fellow-countrymen, making her ready even to die for their sake, "I will go in unto the king: and if I perish, I perish"; and her dutiful bearing towards her foster-father, after the sudden rise in her fortunes, would endear her memory to the Jews. They have ever displayed an intense love for this book, and rightly so. Modern Bible scholars, however, now regard it as a work of fiction; and in view of the fact that it is one of the few books not quoted in the New Testament, as well as a book whose canonicity has long been suspected both by the Jewish and Christian Church, it is being regarded more and more as an apocryphal production.

Canticles, "Song of Songs," or the choicest of songs, is another Bible book over which there has

been immense discussion. It was only admitted into the Canon because it was supposed to be an allegory of Jehovah's love for Israel His spouse. In this spiritual allegorical sense, Rabbi Akiba declared that "the whole world is not worth the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel ; for all the Scriptures are holy, but the Canticles most holy." For centuries the same allegorical view of it prevailed in the Christian Church. From the sixteenth century onward, however, the literal interpretation began to gain ground, and Herder (1778) exquisitely advocated his plea that it was "the natural expression of innocent and tender human love. Is not true love itself holy? for love is the fountain of all man's bliss, and if the songs of Canticles are allowed to speak for themselves, they need no theory to explain their meaning, no apology to justify their morality, no allegorizing to commend them as pure, lovely and worthy of a place in a holy book." Since Herder's day there has been little attempt to restore the allegorical interpretation. It is felt that "no allegorist would thus hide his sacred thoughts behind a screen of erotic and sensuous imagery, so complete and beautiful in itself as to give no suggestion that it is only the vehicle of a deeper spiritual sense." The allegorical interpretation is only a pious fiction and mars the artistic unity of the poem. The generally accepted view at the present day is that Canticles is a drama, mostly dialogue. The heroine is a peasant girl who

now appears among the court-ladies in a palace, where she is not at all at home, for she is passionately in love with a shepherd lad. The hero is the king, who makes seductive advances to the pure maiden, all of which she repels armed only with her own virtue and innocence. In the last chapter the maiden and shepherd lad are reunited: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved? For love is strong as death: many waters cannot quench love: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, he would utterly be contemned." Thus is the heroine happily extricated from the difficult and painful situation in which we found her. The plot in the body of the drama seems to lack life and action, for the heroine's rôle all through is to focus all her thoughts and words on her absent lover and damp the king's ardour by the very intensity of her own preoccupied affection. Her pure heart is so absolutely with the shepherd lad that eventually she converts to her side both the cynical court-ladies and the king himself, who graciously bows to her inflexible fidelity and virtue.

The only parallels to this book are in Hosea, and especially in Psalm xlv.

CHAPTER XVII.

FIGURATIVENESS OF BIBLE LANGUAGE^a.

“IT is not too much to say that a very large portion of what are called Bible difficulties would never have existed, had Western readers realized the tendency to highly poetical and allegorical forms which was so natural to Jewish writers”;—so writes a modern Bible scholar, and never was a truer remark.

In a former chapter (III.), speaking of the Semitic races, we said that they displayed the characteristics of a people who had long been dwellers in tents, living an open air life as nomads in the wilderness. A nation quick and versatile, patient and practical, intense lovers of nature, full of impulse, ardour and passion, their literature is a mirror of themselves and abounds in sensuous, passionate imagery; it delights in the play of fancy and emotion, is essentially nature-loving, and full of word-pictures. Bred for ages, in the childhood of the race, amid the endless excitement and the endless monotony of a roaming life in an extremely inhospitable

^a This chapter, and another (chapter XIX.) on Inspiration, have already appeared (in substance) in the author's “Sermon on the Mount”; but they form an integral part of this book, and are necessarily included in it.

pitable region, wrestling with nature under adverse circumstances and fighting for his own hand, the Semite grew up patient, brave, self-reliant, and imperious of will. He subordinated everything to the action and desire of the moment, seeing the whole universe through the medium of personal feeling. The Semitic mental horizon is comparatively narrow, practical rather than speculative, and intensely emotional. The love and hate, the pride and scorn, the fierce lust of revenge and the wailing grief, the bravery and sensuousness of the Bedouin nomad run strong in the Semitic blood. Thus when their feelings are really stirred, when they are really moved by love or rage or grief (and with their intensely emotional natures this is almost their normal condition), Semites instinctively burst into the emotional lyric strain which is the natural vehicle of intense and passionate personal feeling.

So strongly pronounced is the personal emotional element in Semitic character that all Semitic tongues reflect it vividly in their vocabulary. Almost every word expresses in its root something that can be grasped by the senses, and words are so formed from these roots as to express in word-pictures physical sensations in every possible colouring of light and shade. Even purely intellectual ideas are thus presented in a way distinctly suggesting something that appeals to the eye, or touch, or taste, or to the senses generally. Such a language must therefore necessarily be essentially picturesque and metaphorical.

It has been said that the Hebrews are "even more emotional than their emotional Semitic brethren, they are so intensely subjective;" and certainly their literature bears this out. It is the literature of a people of a passionately emotional temperament and an imperious will, full of the fire of passion, full, too, of keen insight into nature in her power to awake or sustain human emotion. But they record this insight, not calmly and thoughtfully, but in swift, excited, sensuous, half-formed yet strong outlines, in metaphor piled on metaphor without regard to any other principle of proportion than the emotional harmony of each broken figure with the dominant feeling. To the Hebrew prophets and psalmists, religion was an excited and impassioned outpouring of the soul in ecstatic rapture and with rapid movement and a tendency to ring many variations on one tune. They were for the time being God-intoxicated, rapt in Him, and though lacking in depth of speculative reflexion, these Hebrew singers have produced the finest lyrical poetry, "the most glowing utterances of emotional minds," the world has ever seen. In Hebrew patriotism, too, we see the same outbursts of love and rage and grief. We see it when personal or national vanity or emotion vents itself in apparently immoderate boasting, as in the song of Deborah, invective, as in the imprecatory psalms, or wailing, as in the Lamentations. There is an intensity of passion that touches the chords of our hearts and thrills our breasts.

Is it any wonder that we prosaic, matter-of-fact, cold-blooded Englishmen, dwellers under the sad and lowering skies of our northern climate, fail to appreciate the impassioned poetry and glowing imagination, the word-pictures and play of fancy of Eastern minds? In a scientific age which prides itself on its accuracy and exactness of expression, its unbiassed statement of fact so as to set forth things as they are, its clearing the mind of all glow of feeling or any sentiment or play of fancy that may colour its clearness of sight,—how can we hope to grasp the ideas underlying the beautiful imagery and emotional word-pictures of Hebrew poetry? How can it seem anything but strange, far-fetched, high-flown to our minds to hear the Hebrew writer say “the hearts of the people melted within them and became as water” (Josh. vii. 5), or “the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another” (Dan. v. 6), merely to convey the simple idea which we express by the one word “fear”? Why, we ask, should the Hebrew Psalmist speak in such a round-about way as “The Lord shall light my candle, and the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness” (Ps. xviii. 28), when he might have equally well used some simple phrase to express the idea of “gladness” or “joy,” and by a few plain words have made his meaning very much clearer?

Reading our Bible in this dull and literal spirit, turning all its poetry into bald prose, is it any wonder if its words oft lead us astray? The language

of a people is made by them and for them ; it expresses what is common to them all, and has sprung up out of the universal wants of their hearts ; in it their thoughts and character are crystallized. From the subjective, emotional, intense temperament of the Hebrews, therefore, we must expect a language and style revelling in poetry, word-pictures, metaphors, similes, hyperbole, figures of speech, imagery. To them it is not a fanciful exaggeration to say "the sun is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run his course," as it would be to us. They *thought* in word-pictures ; just as in Homer's pages we can't help hearing the very snorting of the horses that are drawing on the car of Apollo, and see the sparks that flash up beneath their feet as they rush along the pavement of heaven. We have gained undoubtedly in clearness of brain and power of making expression correspond with actual facts, but we have also greatly stunted our imagination, and can no longer see the visions of grandeur and beauty which daily roll before our eyes in the commonest things of daily life ; and our language has become just like ourselves.

This is why these Bible word-pictures so often mislead us and we read ideas into the Bible which are not there. We stupidly mistake the form for the substance, the frame for the picture, the garment in which spiritual truth is picturesquely dressed for the truth itself. We are such slaves to logic and facts that we forget that the deepest spiritual lessons can

be taught as truly in poem, parable and fable as in the exact phraseology, the close logical abstract reasoning of modern theological schools.

We can learn more from the simple story of the Prodigal Son, mere parable as it is, than we could draw from a dozen modern treatises on the same subject : and if we would but understand the genius of the Hebrew people, their natural love of bold and striking imagery, the Bible's message would be far more intelligible to us than it is. We should not stumble then over the story of Balaam's ass speaking, or Satan's appearing in the form of a serpent in Eden, nor fail to seize the drift of those eloquent figures of speech which tell us that "the stars fought in their courses against Sisera," and that "the sun stood still upon Gibeon and the moon in the valley of Ajalon." Balaam's ass would speak to our dull ears, even as her stumbling and brushing against the wall opened Balaam's eyes and awoke his sleeping conscience to a sense of his own wrong-doing ; it was a little incident by the way, but it emphasized the misgivings of his heart, just as the ant speaks to the sluggard, the bee to Watts and Shakespeare, the patient spider to—was it Wallace or Bruce?—in his despondency.

The Eden story with its alluring trees of knowledge and of life, its forbidden fruits which seem so "good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, much to be desired to make one wise," and its tempting serpent, would vividly portray the first faint suggestion to

evil, as of some outer voice, the whisper of temptation we all know so well decoying us with its lures and snares to the sin that so easily and stealthily besets us. And what a graphic picture that grand passage "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera : the river Kishon swept them away" (Judg. v. 20), sketches for us of the pitiless rain-storm swelling this little stream into a roaring flood ; the blinding storm beating hard in the face of the foe ; the moistened soil turned into a bog ; the terrified plunging of the horses, as they sink in the deep mire, throwing Sisera's ranks into utter confusion, an easy prey to the onrush of the eager and agile highland Hebrew footmen. The poetical sense of Josh. x. 12, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon ; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon," is too palpable to mislead any one. It is a popular extract from the very old "Book of Jashar," and Josh. x. 14 clearly shows that all it means is that the operations were carried out so rapidly, and Israel did such stalwart deeds, that as much was done as if the day had been twice as long ^b.

It is precisely because we thus fail to discriminate between poetry and prose, imagery and bald fact, truth and its picturesque expression, that we so often lose the spiritual lesson which becomes all the more forcible because embodied in some graphic, vivid,

^b The explanation that a lengthening of the day, and the continued mirage-appearance of the sun above the horizon, was due to an increase of the refractive properties of the atmosphere, is quite possible, and in harmony with the laws of light.

living form which infuses life and action into the picture. It is just by this wondrous genius for word-painting,—the rare power of placing before us in real flesh and blood in a few clear bold strokes, yet with a touch so simple, so delicate and so sure, the sower scattering his seed, the housewife baking her cakes or sweeping the house to find a lost piece of money, the shepherd collecting his sheep, the fishermen drawing in their net,—that Christ lays bare the human heart, makes His parables the vehicles of the deepest spiritual truths, and uses these word-pictures as a barb to the arrow which drives truth home to our minds as nothing else could. We seem to have lost the power, which Christ and David possessed so richly, of looking through Nature up to Nature's God. We ask in wonder how the writer of the 148th Psalm can make beasts and fishes, winds and waves, sun and moon, fire and hail, snow and vapours, all the inanimate forces that beat round the lives of men, praise the Lord and magnify Him for ever! Eyes have we, yet we see not, and it is only by a forced stretch of imagination that we can find "tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything."

Is it any wonder that the bold imagery, the vivid word-pictures, the creative poetry of minds to whom sky and earth were the voices of God, "one day telleth another, and one night certifieth another,"—is it strange that their style of language is the despair and the snare of our prosaic matter-of-fact natures?

Consider the number of books in the Bible which are poetry pure and simple. Of course, we do not mean that it is all written in verse; but its prose has all the artistic form, deep emotional basis and true rhythm which constitute poetry. The Hebrew writers look at the world through the atmosphere that floats before the poet's eyes; their soul for the time being has reached the stage of intense exaltation, of freedom from self-consciousness, so well depicted in the lines :—

“ I started once, or seemed to start, in pain,
Resolved on noble things, and strove to speak,
As when a great thought strikes along the brain
And flushes all the cheek ; ”

and so their message “ comes from the heart and goes to the heart.”

Not only are such divine artistic gems as the Psalms,—the world's “ Great Lyric ”—or the “ Song of Songs ” the purest of poems ; but Lamentations, like the dirge of David over Saul and Jonathan, is exquisite elegiac poetry. Job is a dramatic poem, so is Ecclesiastes. Ruth, Esther, Daniel and Jonah partake of poetical Jewish romance. Isaiah and many of the prophets have all the fire and passion, the artistic form and rhythmical language of the truest poetry. Genesis and many of the earlier historical books read like pages of Froissart or Homer.

We have spoken of the Psalms as the Great Lyric, and it forms a class all by itself. There is nothing in Pindar, or indeed elsewhere in Greek or any other

poetry, like its rapturous song, combining unconscious power with unconscious grace—it is purely Hebrew. It seems to belong as a birthright to those descendants of Shem who, yearning always to look straight into the face of God and live, could see not much else. What poetry can excel in lofty imagination such passages as : “Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment, Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain.” “He rode upon a cherub and did fly : yea, He did fly upon the wings of the wind.” “Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers like yellow gold.” “In the hand of God there is a cup, and the wine foameth : it is full of mixture, and He poureth out of the same : surely the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall drain them out and drink them” ?

To quote only one other example of Hebrew imagination and figurativeness, consider this picture of old age : “When the sun, and the light, and the moon are darkened, and the clouds return after the rain : in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened : and the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low, even though he rise at the voice of the bird : and when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the

way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail : because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets : or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the dust as it was, and the breath shall return unto God Who gave it."

Would any Western mind thus speak of old age with its tottering legs, its toothlessness, dim eyes, deaf ears, loss of taste and desire, its general break up,

" the last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
The second childishness and mere oblivion
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything?"

In reading our Hebrew Bible, well were it for us to remember Hobbes' phrase : " Words are the counters of wise men, but the money of fools." Most of us still treat the words of the Bible as money, forgetting our Lord's caution : " the letter killeth, the spirit giveth life."

CHAPTER XVIII.

OLD TESTAMENT VIEW OF LIFE AFTER DEATH.

NOTHING in the Old Testament so astounds the Christian (for whom "the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come" is an essential article of his creed), as to be told that the Hebrews, down to the latest days of Israel's history, had no conception of an individual resurrection as we understand it,—and yet it is a fact. We do not mean to imply that Christ was the first to stamp ideas of immortality on the minds of men, under the forms of heaven and hell, and a judgment to come; this would be an untrue assumption. His gospel brought life and immortality to light; but it was by illuminating obscure truths, by bringing to a focus all the partial, wandering and separate rays of light on this great subject which had dawned before His time, and pouring upon it a flood of light of His own which far excelled all that had gone before. Nowhere in the Old Testament is the great truth of the slow and gradual evolution of religious conceptions of the very first importance more clearly shown than in the development of the idea of an individual resurrection to eternal life. It has its roots deep down in the soil

of the crude instincts and superstitions of primitive man in the infancy of the world. We can trace its slow growth, "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear," in the course of thousands of years; each stage fostered by its predecessor. The connecting links and historical relations between the various phases in this gradual development must be carefully kept in view. We must grasp how the still living elements of the older ideas were taken up by each newer revelation and assimilated by it; or we shall never thread our way intelligently through this intricate maze.

Roughly speaking, there are five stages in the evolution of the conception of immortality; and they coincide exactly with the corresponding steps in the spiritual evolution of religion in Israel's actual history.

- (1) A very primitive stage representing Israel's spiritual attitude down to the period of the Judges; a mere glimmer of light amid deep shadows.
- (2) The twilight phase from Samuel to about 800 B.C.
- (3) The age of the canonical prophets (760—450 B.C.) when the great truth of life and immortality begins to dawn on men's hearts. But it is still only a gleam, enjoyed but for a moment; still it fills their heart with a bright hope; they see dimly, but they believe strongly.

- (4) 300—1 B.C. It is all but clear daylight ; conceptions of individual immortality are taking a far clearer outline. They gain in health and colour, and are at last emerging robed in the pure, clear light of spiritual thought.
- (5) In Christ "The Sun of righteousness rises with healing in His wings;" "the day breaks in all its fulness and splendour, and the shadows flee away;" Christ has brought life and immortality to light.

The Bible gives us a history of these five stages. We must be prepared to see men, groping among low and unformed notions, visited with a gleam of light, taking in its significance slowly, and so for a long time dwelling still in a sort of twilight. Watch the process as light follows light. Realize the importance of each step: measure it not by the light which follows but by the darkness which is left behind, and we shall see how true are the words of the writer to the Hebrews that God spoke to men in olden days, made His revelation to them "by divers portions, and in divers manners," here a little, there a little. "The Old Testament makes its revelations piecemeal: its writers are like subordinate workmen, each absorbed in his own particular task. It is only when the Master-builder appears, with the full idea of the house in His mind, that each of the separate parts prepared beforehand by the workmen takes its proper place in the building" (Davidson).

During the first stage of evolution, down to the period of the Judges, the Hebrew idea of life after death is practically identical with the beliefs of primitive races everywhere on this subject.

In the infancy of the race man found himself face to face with death. The chief difference between a living and a dead body is that, as soon as ever the breath leaves the body, warmth and motion cease, and the body at once begins to decay. Therefore, "breath is life"; and almost every language expresses this idea in its word for "soul." But breath is air; and air is eternal, universal, imperishable; therefore the "soul," or portion of air which gave life to the body, does not perish at the dissolution of the body, but returns to the Divine Air,—a living person in those olden days,—of which it is part, and out of which it came. A curious belief soon followed from this: since millions of souls had in course of time been released from their bodies and returned to air, the air must literally be full of them, swarm with souls, the "spirits" of the dead which the ancients so dreaded.

The writer of Genesis ii. — who lived about 1000 B.C. — uses the language common to other primitive peoples, but accommodates it to his own higher type of religion. Just as in his story of the Creation of the world, he does not evolve God out of chaos, but places Him above and before all things, [so he here makes Him the source of life. It is His own Breath that He breathes into man's

nostrils, so that man becomes a living soul. At death this breath returns not to the air, but to God's Breath from which it came.

From the fact that men, animals and things generally,—it is unfortunate that we cannot here abolish the word things, for to primitive man there were no "things," every object was fully alive,—are often seen to appear to others in dreams and visions, primitive man jumped at what seems to us a strange conclusion. He believed firmly that men, animals and things have a thin phantom likeness, a shadowy outline of themselves, separable from the real person or object, which can leave the person, travel and appear to others however far away.

When a man died, it was believed in these very early days that this thin, vaporous, material outline, phantom or shadow, was transported to some distant region, where it existed continuously, or rather vegetated. There was, however, no thought of rewards and punishments in this common home of the departed; the moral question did not come in at all: it was simply an existence which was something between being and not being. Intellectually and morally the man was as good as dead; all the movement, freedom and joy of existence was at an end.

The Babylonians from earliest times had this common primitive conception of an underworld to which the dead "phantom souls" were relegated; a place inside the bowels of the earth which they

called Shelu. The Hebrews inherited from the Babylonians both the conception of this underworld and their name for it,—Sheol,—and with them it was also located in the bowels of the earth. Thither a shadowy outline of man's body went after death: good and bad were all huddled together, living a shadowy, featureless, inane, lifeless existence. It was, if anything, worse than even Homer's vision of Hades: the Hebrew Sheol was a kind of vast subterranean tomb, with the barred and bolted gates common to Hebrew tombs, in which the ghosts did not even flit about, but lay like corpses in a sepulchre. It was a dreary place, where all were forgotten by man and God: a land of gloom and shadow, where intercourse with God was impossible; for in that realm man could neither pray nor praise: the life of this underworld was joyless and cheerless and no life at all.

Even in the days of the early monarchy, the Jews had no other idea than this of life after death. Very occasionally we catch a glimpse of a thin flicker of light, but it is the merest gleam. David's care in gathering the bones of Saul and Jonathan, and burying them with the bones of their father, was not merely a kindly act of respect. It breathes the very spirit of the belief current in those days that the spirit of the unburied dead would roam about without rest, and be unable to enter Sheol. This accounts for the dread of what was then considered the greatest misfortune that could happen to a man at death,

the denial of sepulture. Hence the frequent threat, so common in the Bible, to give bodies to be eaten by wild beasts and birds.

How can we account for the long survival of this low, and to us unnatural view of life after death, even at a time when other religious conceptions had already advanced to a stage which seems to us utterly incompatible with such an idea? It is due to a cause which is harder still for us to realize. One of the very strangest things in the Old Testament is the fact that the individual as such does not exist till comparatively late times (600 B.C.). An Old Testament Hebrew was absolutely merged, swallowed up in his family and his nation. In himself he had little or no place at all. The unit in Old Testament days was the family, the tribe, or the nation, and the individual completely effaced and lost himself in these larger wholes. In this way only can we understand that the sins of Achan, Korah, Dathan and Abiram involve not only the guilty individuals but their families as well, and all in any way associated with them; in the case of Achan the whole nation suffers a disastrous defeat because of his sin. Naturally, therefore, if the man himself has no individuality of his own in this life, he has none, expects none in the world beyond the grave. *On earth* he lives in his family and nation; *on earth* he receives in his family and nation all the blessings and prosperity Jehovah showers upon him. "That thy days may be prolonged in the land" was all he looked and

hoped for. In Hebrew days and Hebrew eyes life on earth was the only real and solid thing. When in these early times the individual approached death, he felt he had received the blessing of life from God and had enjoyed it in His Presence and communion. His sojourn here had come to an end; he was old and full of days, and he acquiesced in death, however strange his acquiescence may seem to us.

He did not look forward as we do to a kingdom of heaven in the future; Jehovah's kingdom was here on earth. To him the kingship of Jehovah, the conception that Jehovah was the actual King of Israel here and now, was not a mere ideal, but an actual reality; so he never dreamt of a future supernatural kingdom into which he should enter after death.

Besides, if he gave himself a second thought at all, he consoled himself with the thought that he should not all die: he lived on really and actually in his family, his tribe and his nation. He felt well rewarded if, after a good life spent here, he reaped the harvest of the good seeds he had sown in seeing his children blessed of God to the third and fourth generation. He saw in anticipation the good of his family, the good of his beloved nation, and in their blessing he felt abundantly blessed. He was more than content to have poured his little stream of life and service into the tide of family and national life, and in some degree to have swelled it. As to the possible annihilation of either his family or nation,

this was a catastrophe too awful even to contemplate, and such a possibility he did not so much as whisper to himself. Jehovah had established His Covenant with Israel, an inviolable and everlasting covenant, so the nation at any rate was safe; and Jehovah had also promised to show mercy unto thousands of generations of them that love Him.

Say what we will, this idea of being directly under God's rule and in His Kingdom here on earth, and therefore abundantly blessed in the good of family and nation, is a high ideal, and an unselfish and noble one. We can well understand how it sufficed so long, at least, as Jehovah's actual kingship of Israel, His own chosen people, was a clear indisputable reality to the Hebrews here and now on earth.

This simple creed received its first rude shock when foreign enemies thundered at the gate. In them the canonical prophets recognized the rod and hammer of Jehovah, and opened the people's eyes to the terrible suggestion, though believe it the people would not, that degenerate Israel had ceased to be Jehovah's chosen people. To the prophets, as we have already seen, this much was clear, that Israel as a nation was rotten to the core, and Jehovah had rejected it. In spite of His long-suffering patience, it had shown no tokens of fitness to discharge the vocation of Jehovah's chosen people, and so become His kingdom on earth. But the canonical prophets do not yet anticipate a kingdom anywhere else but on earth. Though they are convinced that the

present Israel must perish, they feel equally certain in their absolute faith in Jehovah's Covenant with His chosen people, that a new and better Israel will rise from its grave and become Jehovah's kingdom here on earth. The New Testament idea of a purely spiritual kingdom of God, in this world but not of it, is beyond the prophet's horizon ; though at times in Isaiah, and especially in the second Isaiah, it comes very close to it. In prophetic mouths "The Day of the Lord" was to be the day when Jehovah would judge His people ; but behind His judgment there always rises clear the salvation and restoration of Israel as a new and purified nation. Even the second Isaiah looks at it in this light : his Servant of the Lord Who is to expiate not only Israel's guilt but also that of the heathen world, and be a light to the Gentiles, is only an idealized earthly Israel.

So it is that with this fixed idea that the kingdom of Jehovah is still on earth, it is still on earth that the prophets look for the realization of all their hopes of actual communion and fellowship with Jehovah the King. Their idea of life after death remains precisely the same as before. Even these highly-spiritual canonical prophets cannot shake off the nightmare of Sheol as a mere receptacle of phantom souls, an underworld outside Jehovah's ken. With the people the belief in the unaltered and unalterable old state of things is naturally still more pronounced. Let the prophets say what they will, the nation is convinced that it is Jehovah's own

chosen nation, and will never be cast off. To the popular mind "the Day of the Lord" is not a day of judgment, as the prophets preach. It is a day when their Jehovah will interpose in their behalf and deliver them, especially from external foes, though internal miseries may also be included. "Ask of Me and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance: thou shalt break the nations with a rod of iron: thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." These words of Ps. ii., though written later, exactly voice the popular ideas on the Day of the Lord.

As citizens of a kingdom of God here and now, the Hebrews of the prophetic period do not look for another beyond the grave. Of Sheol may still be written, "All hope abandon ye that enter here." Even righteous Hezekiah trembled lest when he closed his eyes on the earth, where he walked in close fellowship with God, "his eyes should no longer see the Lord in the land of the living." In Sheol there is no more giving of thanks or praise to God, "For the grave cannot praise Thee; death cannot celebrate Thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise Thee, as I do this day" (Is. xxxviii. 18) (cf. Ps. vi. 5; xxx. 9; cxv. 17). God Himself does not remember the dead any more: "Shall Thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave? and Thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?" (Ps. lxxxviii. 11, 12). "The fortunes of their children do not concern the dead" (Job xiv. and xxi.), "for

there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in Sheol whither thou goest" (Eccles. ix. 10).

The language of these passages from Psalms and Prophet is not the strain of a passing mood. Strong as is their faith in Jehovah, close as is their walk and communion with God here on earth, a blank is found in the creed of these holy men when life beyond the grave is in question. Their hope ended with this life. Yet, though he could give himself no reason for his pious aspiration, both psalmist and prophet at times could not believe that the pit, the shadowy half-existence of Sheol, was to be the end of all for the friend of God.

One who had set Jehovah always before him, and desired none in heaven or earth in comparison with his God, could not thus be left in darkness and forgetfulness. It must be that he should awake and behold God's face in righteousness and be satisfied with His likeness (Ps. xvii. 15 ; xlix. 15). "God will not leave my soul in Hell: neither will He suffer His holy one to see corruption: He will shew me the path of life: in His presence is fulness of joy: at His right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps. xvi. 9—11). Nevertheless, this aspiration was only a reach of faith. No revelation from God had yet been given, no clear teaching could be taught, no complete assurance could be enjoyed on this subject. There was still an impenetrable veil, but these occasional gleams are the first signs of the brighter light which is soon to dawn. We can but

admire and wonder at the vigour and tenacity of faith shown by these holy men at a time when there was absolutely none of the comfortable assurance, no revelation at all of a future life. In a way we can account for this new aspiration. It was the natural outcome of Jeremiah's great discovery that religion is a personal matter, a relationship between God and the individual soul: "They shall no more teach everyone his neighbour saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know Me from the least of them even to the greatest of them" (Jer. xxxi. 33).

With this all-important discovery the whole aspect of religion changes. Hitherto it has been a purely national, henceforth it is going to be a personal question between God and the individual believer; though in actual fact it is not till the days of the Gospel that the last shreds of the old national idea disappear. We soon see the results of this new idea of personal religion, for the great question now crying for an answer is, "How can we reconcile a belief in God's Moral Government of the World with actual experience? Why, then, do the righteous suffer and the wicked flourish? How are we to justify the ways of God in His dealings with individual men?" It has already been seen that even following this line of thought alone there could finally be but one answer. The first solution suggested, "virtue leads always to prosperity and wickedness to failure even in this life," would not do; actual facts told too heavily against it. Job's

solution, "suffering is essential to beauty and strength of character," was better every way, but still inadequate. These attempts at solving the problem all left the main question untouched. "How are we to account for the fact that in actual experience God does not fulfil His solemn promise to reward the righteous and punish the wicked (Deut. xxviii.), but so often does precisely the opposite?" It appeared as if God were asleep (Ps. xlv. 23). The prosperous transgressor asked mockingly, "Where is now thy God?" (Ps. xlii. 3—10). If men were to be rescued from the pessimism of an Ecclesiastes there could be but one answer; a day was coming when God would call everything and every man into judgment, when each one should reap as he had sown. There must be a second hearing of the whole case by God Himself, when all men's wrongs should be set right.

That this was the only possible solution is clear from the fact that it is actually the triumphant reply given by the late writer of Ecclesiastes xi., xii. So from the moment that religion became personal, a question between the individual believer and his God, a belief in an actual life of fellowship with God beyond the grave was bound to be the natural outcome of it all, sooner or later.

But another and a quite different set of circumstances led to exactly the same result. After the Captivity the nation had disappeared. The yoke of foreign oppressors rested continually on the land, and Israel found itself no longer a real living nation

under Jehovah as its King in any sense of the word. He was still the hope of Israel, but He was no longer visibly or actually present. The present was a blank, and the living realities of Jehovah's Kingship were but memories of a past, written in a book. As time passed, things only went from bad to worse. "When would God again visit and redeem His chosen people?" men were asking in their anguish. For a time it seemed as if a satisfactory answer had been found. Men began to look to the prophetic books in the hope and belief that *there* might be found predictions which still awaited fulfilment; clues that might be taken to refer to these latter days of Persian and Greek oppression. They found there a number of unfulfilled predictions which buoyed their hopes. What was spoken, they maintained, must be literally accomplished. The prophets' predictions of judgment had been fulfilled by the Exile, but their prediction of the new and perfect Israel was still unrealized. In this spirit Daniel kept alive Israel's hopes by showing that the 70 years foretold by the prophet for the nation's restoration had been misunderstood; that the real 70 years were 70 weeks of years, so that the longed-for time was only just now drawing near.

But as time went on, and the day of Israel's restoration came and went and no lightening of the nation's burden of oppression accompanied it, the iron entered deep into Israel's soul. The nation seemed to be lying under God's interdict: depression

and sadness was now its sole heritage. Their long oppression, the political bankruptcy of their nation, made the Jews give up all hope of any earthly king of David's line ever being able to thrust back the arms of the oppressing heathen. A better and a supernatural king must be looked for; the true deliverance must come from God and not from man. Thus it was that the idea of a personal Messiah, triumphing over Israel's enemies, and establishing Jehovah's kingdom, became fully developed and pronounced in the century and a half before Christ. The ideal Davidic king of earthly origin so confidently promised by prophets had lost his first attractiveness. These seers had so long sustained the nation's hopes, and reassured pious souls with the sure and certain belief that the nation, after it had been purified by the punishment of sinners and the discipline of the godly, would be restored. They had assured Israel that they would obtain complete victory over their enemies and oppressors, and God would bestow upon them such glory, peace and well-being as would surpass all the glories of their happiest days. This was clearly only an empty dream. They had waited for him so long, and he had not appeared, nor were there any signs of his coming. Some gave up all hope of this deliverer; it would anyhow not be in their time. The glories of Israel were either confined to the remote past or the dim future. The promise was in books, and that was all. But even in the darkest days there yet remained

some earnest souls who clung to the old faith and tried to revive it. Jehovah was ever faithful to His Covenant and promises. The golden year would assuredly come; though the conviction was daily growing stronger that the Davidic King would be no man but God Himself. A unique and ideal character was now attributed to this King. The very fact that he was separated by such a long interval of time from all his predecessors on the throne of Israel deepened people's sense of the magnitude of the events in connection with which he would appear, and of his immeasurable greatness.

Here again it is in Daniel that we first see the picture of this great coming King, the first real presentation of that Messiah-hope which looms so large in all Hebrew literature after his day; and the Book of Daniel is the model on which all apocalyptic after-writers shape their predictions. Even before these hopes of a Messianic person had been thus definitely formed, the Book of Zephaniah, for example, had paved the way for it. In it we see a vision of the great day of the Lord's vengeance on the sinners in Israel, with the destruction of the surrounding nations, and the subsequent glorious happiness of Zion. But in Daniel the whole picture is presented in clear and definite outline. His book deals with the actual restoration of Israel, and the victorious establishment of the worship of Jehovah under a Davidic prince, with a wealth of detail that is quite new. The kingdom of God is at last established firmly

on earth. It is preceded by the Abomination of Desolation when sin, oppression and Hell do their worst for a season, only to be utterly crushed by the Most High. The glorious deliverance is ushered in by a partial resurrection of the dead, some of whom, or rather "many of whom now sleeping in the dust awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. xii. 2). Thus is inaugurated Messiah's kingdom: "There is given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. vii. 14). Instead of vague predictions there is now a definite date assigned to this deliverance and prosperous future. Even those who have fallen victims to persecution will not lose their reward; they will be raised up from their graves and share in the triumph.

On this model (180—160 B.C.) all following writers on the subject shaped their predictions, and in the main they all agree on certain important points:—

- (1) On a definite Day of the Lord, sometimes fixed by these writers, sometimes stated as "known only to God," Messiah will come.
- (2) Then will ensue a Great Day of Judgment. All judgment is committed to the Messiah, Who will sit on the throne of His glory judging the prince of this world and his angels,

and all the hosts of evil demons and wicked men.

- (3) Heaven and earth will be transformed. The righteous will be glorified and reign with Messiah : the heathen nations converted and be subject to Israel. Himself without sin, there is no unrighteousness in Messiah's days, for all are saints.
- (4) The righteous dead are raised to share in this glory, as a reward for their past tribulation.

A marked feature in the literature of the two centuries just before Christ is the prominence given to future rewards and punishments to quick and dead, according to their works. The Messianic kingdom is preceded by a Day of Judgment and just recompense for all the living and the dead. On fallen angels too is their verdict passed. It is an individual judgment for each man. A throne is set up ; the sealed books are opened ; to each man is meted out his due ; and the evil angels are cast into an abyss of fire.

Sheol now naturally undergoes a radical change. In Daniel, it is still regarded as the final home of all mankind save the best and worst in Israel. The righteous rise to everlasting life, and the worst are cast into a place of shame and everlasting contempt. After Daniel's day all this is altered : instead of being as in former days a place where good and bad

are all huddled together, Sheol becomes a place of rewards and punishments, where men are dealt with according to their deserts. All souls are still relegated to Sheol at death, awaiting the final judgment that shall usher in the reign of Messiah, but they have distinct habitations assigned them there. These are four in number: (1) for those who have died an undeserved death; (2) for the rest of the righteous; (3) for the wicked who have already suffered on earth for their sins; (4) for the wicked who have sinned and escaped punishment in this life. More and more did Sheol come to be regarded as the intermediate abode of the dead, a place half-way between death and judgment, where the departed already have a foretaste of their final bliss or doom. In many apocalyptic writers it is a place of purification as well, where there is possibility of moral improvement.

During the century immediately preceding the Christian era changes in Messianic hopes had appeared in two diametrically opposed directions. One set of opinions gave expression to the natural conviction that an *eternal* Messianic Kingdom cannot suitably be manifested on the present earth. Hence from this period the Final Judgment is seldom placed at the inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom on earth but at its close, and heaven becomes its true sphere.

The other idea which seized the popular fancy just before Christ's Advent,—an idea wide apart as the poles from the other,—sprang from a renewal of

the political hopes of the Jews. The purely spiritual aspect of the Messianic hope faded away more and more. A Messiah of another sort was wanted, who should really and actually restore the Kingdom of David, with all its pomp, magnificence, and political power, to Israel. It was in truth this secularization of the Messianic expectation that led to the crucifixion of Jesus. A suffering and meek Messiah was not at all in harmony with the views of the Jews of our Lord's day, or to their liking. His own disciples even were totally unprepared for it. The mass of the nation wanted and fully expected a Messiah who should lead them to victory over their enemies and crush them, bringing in an era of great material prosperity.

It only remains to explain some terms connected with the life beyond the grave, such as Paradise, Gehenna, Abraham's bosom, the origin of which we owe to this period.

Paradise is a Persian word and idea. It is a park, enclosed against injury and intruders, a garden of exquisite natural beauty, with stately trees, and watered by clear streams. The hanging-gardens of Babylon suggest Mesopotamia as the original source of the idea. Also, to the Jewish mind, the association with the garden of Eden, man's home before he sinned, would at once present itself; especially as the Septuagint had used the word *Paradise* to translate the "garden" of Gen. ii. So the apocalyptic writers

loved to imagine Paradise as a restored Eden, and filled it with all the delights of sense,—streams of milk and honey, trees laden with divers luscious fruits, hills whereon grew roses and lilies. Paradise thus became the bright sinless dwelling of the righteous. At one time it is the intermediate state between death and judgment, at other times their eternal abode. Sometimes it is conceived as an “earthly paradise” somewhere in the far East; more commonly it is represented in the new regenerated Sheol, or in heavenly places. The general idea was that Sheol was divided into two compartments: Gehenna on the one side, with its flames and torments: Paradise on the other, with its restored garden of Eden. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were there ready to receive their descendants into their bosom. Abraham’s bosom was the place of highest honour.

The Apocalypses also tell us that as the righteous enter Paradise angels strip them of their grave-clothes, array them in new robes of glory, and place on their heads diadems of gold and pearls. There is no night there, and the pavement of Paradise is all of precious stones.

To the ordinary Jew of Christ’s day Paradise, as Josephus tell us, was a far off place of delight, where there was no rain or extreme cold or heat. It was perpetually refreshed by gentle zephyrs; a place of sensuous bliss, of repose, shelter, joy and happiness ineffable. It is probably because of its connection with such associations of sensuous happiness that

Christ only uses the word Paradise once,—to the dying thief; possibly as the word which would convey most meaning and comfort to him. He was a rough man, with only the most elementary and popular religious notions. To him the word Paradise was specially fitting, assuring him, in the only way he could understand, of the immediate rest and peace that awaited him after all his sufferings on the cross.

Gehenna. The Valley of Hinnom, or Gehenna, in Josiah's day, had become the scene of idolatrous and human sacrifices to Moloch, and such a sink of iniquity, that Josiah polluted it with human bones and other corruptions. It is generally accepted that it became the receptacle of all the city-refuse and the dead carcasses of animals and criminals, and so perpetual fires were there kept up night and day to destroy this mass of corruption. It was naturally a nasty place and shunned; so much so that the Jews fancied that the gate of hell lay in this valley: "there are two palm trees in the valley of Hinnom between which a smoke ariseth, and this is the door of Gehenna (Hell)" (Talmud). In Is. l. 11, and lxvi. 24^a, "They shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against Me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and

^a Both these passages are of very late date,—probably 3rd century B.C., but undoubtedly refer to Gehenna as a place of punishment for apostate Jews. The Heb. word for 'abhorrence,' here used, only occurs again in Dan. xii. 2, again in reference to Gehenna (Driver).

they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." Gehenna represents the place of punishment for rebellious and sinful Jews in the presence of the righteous ; and the punishment is eternal. All through the Hebrew apocalypses it is always a place of punishment for the wicked in the presence of the righteous. For a long time, the righteous are supposed to be spectators of this punishment to all eternity. Gradually this idea became repellent, and they witness only the beginning of the torment of the wicked. Also at the outset body and soul were tormented ; later on it is only the soul that suffers. In some revelations Gehenna is altogether ignored, as it was felt that in the new transformed heaven and earth there could possibly be no place for Gehenna. Nevertheless, the common popular belief in our Lord's day was that Gehenna was a place of irreversible doom for the wholly wicked ; and, as usual, Christ speaking as a Jew to Jews uses it in its popular and prevalent sense. Even in Christ's day there were all the so-called modern ideas about it. Gehenna was regarded as a place of (1) everlasting punishment, (2) temporary punishment followed by annihilation, (3) as a purgatory, so that eventually all should be redeemed and blessed.

Besides Gehenna there is mention made in the Book of Enoch of the " Lake of fire and brimstone " reserved for fallen angels and wicked men, and this is referred to in the Revelation of S. John.

Enough has been said to show that when our

Lord came He found all the teaching about the last day, Judgment, rewards and punishments after death, already definitely fixed and rooted in the Hebrew mind. It is usual to regard our Lord's use of the current terms Paradise, Final Judgment and Gehenna as a divine sanction of their literal meaning and truth. But is this so?

Jesus spoke as a Jew to Jews, and His ideas, naturally, were expressed in such words and terms as they could grasp and understand. A teacher has to be very patient, look at things from his pupils' standpoint, remember that they do not see as far as he does, and make truth easier for them by taking their lower view and gradually raising them up to a higher plane. This was God's way of educating the Jews in the Old Testament; it is Christ's in the New.

Again, we must not forget how constantly Christ uses a figurative style of speech, speaks in parables and word-pictures, such as all Orientals adopt in conversation. Similes, parables, metaphors were ever on His lips, and if we press Christ's words in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, for instance, and see a lesson in every detail, we shall certainly misinterpret Christ altogether.

Once more, Christ was a Jew, and, therefore, above all things, practical. As a nation the Jews take little or no interest in pure speculation, but subordinate everything to the actual needs of daily life and conduct. Christ never indulged in speculative

discussions if He could possibly help it : questions whose only object was to satisfy curiosity. When one asked Him, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" His immediate reply was, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate": and when S. Peter asked a question about S. John out of curiosity, Christ's only answer was "What is that to thee? follow thou Me." We must, therefore, expect no information from Christ on points which only tend to satisfy curious inquiry. All along, Christ's invariable attitude towards the life to come was ever to impress on His hearers that the one important matter in connection with it was the moral and practical side of the question. He wanted, above all else, to dislodge His hearers' thoughts from the accidental details, the bliss or the terrors of the Last-Day, and focus them on its essential bearing and application to the present life. The whole intention of His picture of the Final Judgment in S. Matth. xxv. 35 sqq. is to make all who hear His words or read them see that the issue lies wholly in their own hands. Are they doing their Father's Will or leaving it undone? Are they feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, needy, or unfortunate? Nothing can better prove Christ's main motive than His unmistakable words that, on this Great Day, He will test and judge us by our behaviour to "the least of these His brethren."

We have no right whatever, therefore, to say that Christ's use of the current expressions of His day

about the life to come sanctions the literal meaning and truth conveyed by these expressions. He treated popular religious terms as all true teachers must ever treat them: He rescued them for the service of the new and true ideas He came to reveal: He employed the old familiar symbols and imagery of heaven and hell to impress upon men's consciences the supreme bliss of righteousness, the awful misery of sin. The words He uses are often strong and full of large suggestion, remarkable for their variety as well as for their figurative force; they are, in fact, striking word-pictures, but they do not necessarily take us beyond the broad fact that there is a real active life of close communion with God into which men pass at death; that as we have sown here so shall we assuredly reap there. God is a righteous Judge, and His verdict on our life-work and character will be right and just: there must be a rehearing of all men's verdicts before His bar, and all human wrongs will be set right.

Theologians have gone further than this, and ventured on many definitions of things left undefined in the Scriptures. They have developed precise and dogmatic teaching on the condition of men between death and the resurrection, on which the New Testament says not a word. It is so easy to let imagination and speculation run riot, but it profits little. "In its ideas and definite teaching the New Testament turns for the most part on the present life, with its moral choices and spiritual responsi-

bilities, the untold moral issues that depend upon our character and conduct here ; the New Testament also speaks clearly on the state of being that follows the judgment, with its final decisions. It makes little of the mysterious space that comes between the two " (Salmond).

Communion with God here, communion with God hereafter, this is the conclusion of the whole matter ; so said F. D. Maurice in a beautiful passage with which we shall close this chapter : " How I long to be telling myself, and telling everyone, that the Hell we have to fly is ignorance of the perfect goodness, and separation from it : and the Heaven we have to seek is the knowledge of it ; and participation in it. Then I have no fear of the message of the gospel and the Church all manifesting itself to men in due time. But while that kind of notion of Christianity, which Christians seem to have taken up at one time, haunts the air, I do not see what we can expect but constant alternations of gloomy faith and gloomier unbelief. Punishment and reward to ourselves, instead of spiritual death from ignorance of God and sinking into self, and eternal life from knowing Him and deliverance from self."

CHAPTER XIX.

INSPIRATION.

IN this book we have attempted to give the main principles now accepted on all hands amongst scholars as the assured results of modern Old Testament criticism. "It is agreed that the Prophets, not the Law, must be taken as the starting-point of all our study of the history of Israel: that the Hexateuch must be recognized as a compilation of late date; that the early parts of Genesis are religious prose poems based upon folk-lore; that the whole Levitical system was the result of late growth; that much of the history of the Old Testament is not, in the ordinary sense of the term, historical, but idealized history written with a moral and religious rather than historical aim; that in almost every book there are clear evidences of interpolations by later hands: that whole books are not the work of their professed authors: that there is a pronounced human as well as a Divine element in the Old Testament" (Kirkpatrick).

It may be asked, "How can one reconcile such views with Inspiration? How is such an idea of the Old Testament consistent with the Bible's own words: *The Word of God came not from man, but*

holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost? How is it compatible, too, with the accepted Canon of Holy Scripture to discuss the authenticity of this or that book in Holy Writ?"

We acknowledge the fairness and justice of this criticism, and in this and the following chapter we propose to consider these two points.

What is Inspiration? There was a time when anyone who doubted the *verbal* inspiration of the Bible, its literal accuracy in every detail,—in historical and scientific as well as spiritual matters,—was regarded as virtually a heretic. The Bible was looked upon as the very Word of God, absolutely true in every particular, every single statement correct; not one jot or tittle of it could be called into question. The last verses of its last chapter: "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life,"—were taken to apply word for word to all Holy Scripture. It was considered nothing short of a heinous sin against God, a blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, Who was the real and only Author of the Bible, to question its veracity in any the smallest detail, a mortal sin which would involve awful consequences.

This is not to be wondered at in days when the inspired writers were regarded as mere passive instruments in the hands of God, bare mouthpieces,

through whom He delivered His message to mankind. According to Philo, the "man of God" was in a state of entire unconsciousness while under the influence of Divine inspiration: "for the human understanding takes its departure on the arrival of the Divine Spirit, and, on its removal, again returns to its home; for the mortal must not dwell with the immortal." In like manner Josephus makes Balaam excuse himself to Balak for his failure on the same principle: "When the Spirit of God seizes us, It utters whatever words and sounds It pleases, without any knowledge on our part; for when It has come into us, there is nothing in us which remains our own." Under the influence of Divine inspiration, these inspired men were believed to be in such a state of passive ecstatic unconsciousness that their personality counted for nothing; they could not even choose to alter one single letter in the Divine message, but simply poured forth mechanically the words which the Holy Spirit put into their mouth.

The Jewish Rabbis were of opinion that there were degrees of inspiration; Moses holding easily the first place in the scale. Every syllable of his Pentateuch was believed to have been *dictated* to him by God; next in order they placed the prophetic writings, while the Hagiographa ranked last of all.

The early Christian Church took over bodily the Jewish views respecting the inspiration of the Old Testament and treated a belief in verbal inspiration

as an article of faith, long holding the view that the inspired writers were mere passive instruments in God's hands. Thus S. Gregory describes them as "God's pens"; Justin Martyr speaks of them as "lyres," while the Holy Spirit is the "quill" which strikes the chords and produces the music. On the other hand, even thus early, Chrysostom, Basil, Jerome and especially Origen already laid stress on the individuality of these inspired men as moulding their work. As a rule, however, the Church till comparatively recent days adopted the *verbal* inspiration view so strongly that it was held to be useless or superfluous to ask who had written a particular passage so long as it was to be found in the Bible. The author's personality was of no moment at all, since the Holy Spirit alone was the real Author of the whole Bible, had formed the very words in the mouth of prophets and apostles, and, therefore, all Holy Scripture was of equal Divine value.

Holding such uncompromising views, is it surprising that men forced themselves to accept every word of the Bible as God's own, and believed its every fact implicitly as God's truth? They were not startled at anything, and, when confronted with serious difficulties or glaring inconsistencies in the Bible text, their one reply was: "It is written in God's Word, and therefore I believe it."

In modern days there are two extreme schools of thought on this subject. The literalists still

insist on the old rigid view of verbal inspiration ; while others go so far as to deny that there is any difference between the inspiration of Holy Scripture and the inspiration of such great works of human genius as Homer's *Iliad* or Milton's *Paradise Lost*. As usual in such cases, the truth probably lies half-way between these two extremes.

The general consensus of opinion in the present day is overwhelmingly strong and decided in its opposition to verbal inspiration as utterly irreconcilable with any view of man as a free agent : as quite contrary to anything we find elsewhere in God's methods of dealing with men. In actual human experience, both in Bible days and now, we invariably see God deliberately treating men as free and conscious agents, willing fellow-workers together with Himself, never forcing them to any course of action against their will, not even to their own good. In the same manner, we shall see that, when God inspired the Bible writers, He did not make them mere passive channels of His revelation, mere lifeless instruments unconscious of the Divine message they were uttering or of its purpose, yet forced to deliver it whether they willed it or not : He used them as willing conscious agents. Under God's inspiration they become "seers," men whose intuition is so quickened, enlightened and prompted by the Holy Spirit that for the time being they are taken into the counsel of God ; they consciously both see and hear God's purpose and plan, and reveal it

to men. They fully grasp the message with which God fills their minds and hearts. They clearly and consciously see it as God wants them to see it, enlightens them to see it, intensifies their brain and heart power to see it. Dean Stanley defined inspiration as "a divine impulse given to the prophet's own thoughts," but it probably means more than this. It is rather a message from God flashed upon the inspired man as a kind of intuition.

In the prophetic age,—the purest age of inspiration, to which we owe three-fourths of the Old Testament,—these holy men of God themselves tell us, almost in so many words, that, while under the influence of the Holy Spirit, they felt as a man who is engaged in earnest devotion or absorbed in rapt communion with God. There can be no shadow of a doubt that God's revelations were made to the inspired writers in their ordinary conscious state. It is true that the man's mind was intensely spiritualised; but the important point to remember is that it remained fully awake and conscious during the inspiration. He not only received God's message, but himself thoroughly grasped the depth and purpose of it all.

How, then, are we to account for the almost universal belief in verbal inspiration so long prevalent both with Jews and Christians, the belief that the inspired writers could not even choose to alter one single syllable in the Divine message for

the simple reason that, while under the influence of the Holy Spirit, they were in an unconscious and ecstatic state, mere dummies in God's hands? The reasons are not far to seek. 1 Sam. ix. 9 tells us that "Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer." Now these seers or soothsayers are to be found among all primitive peoples; and they were regarded with awe as men "possessed," under the influence of a spirit or demon who inspired them and spoke through them. Sometimes these men gifted with the faculty of second-sight owned it at all times, like Samuel. They could be advantageously consulted even in private matters like the loss of the asses of Kish. But, as a rule, seers could only reveal what was hidden to others, gaze behind the veil, when possessed by the spirit or demon, which for the time being overpowered the soul of the medium, and took entire possession of him. The medium could not himself bring on a revelation. He was, at rare intervals, seized by the supernatural spirit, his consciousness ceased, and the god spoke through him words which he was himself unable to control or even at times to understand. Examples of this kind of revelation are common in the ancient world, in Arabia, Greece, everywhere. In the Bible, Balaam, and the "maiden possessed with a spirit of divination" (Acts xvi. 16, 19) are cases in point. These soothsayers, diviners, prognosticators

(Is. xlvii.) were the natural outcome of an age steeped in magic and sorcery. And this superstition struck deeper root in the hearts of the intensely credulous and emotional Semitic peoples than anywhere else. The religions of Arabia, Babylonia and Canaan fully prove it; while the uncompromising and hostile attitude of the prophets (Micah v. 12, Jer. xxvii. 9 and Isaiah) towards soothsaying shows how strongly it appealed to the Jews at all times.

Now when we pass to the prophets of the days of Samuel, we come to an entirely different class of persons from these spirit-possessed "soothsayers" who worked themselves into a state of frenzy allied to madness and gave utterance to ecstatic cries, or exhibited other tokens of possession, under the compelling influence of their demon-spirit. The "schools of the prophets" were a new and unique phenomenon, nowhere mentioned before the time of Samuel. They were peculiar to Israel, a purely Hebrew growth on Hebrew soil. We have already seen (ch. xiii.) that they were the outcome of the intense wave of patriotic enthusiasm and religious revival which burst over Israel after their defeat by the Philistines at Aphek. These prophets appear not individually, like the old seers, but in bands. As in the Middle Ages the ravages of the plague gave rise to troops of flagellants, so Israel's subjection to a people hated and unclean worked these enthusiasts into a state of holy frenzy, and produced,

as it always does in the East, a new religious order, like the howling dervishes of Islam.

The prophesying of these prophets is marked by intensely excited preaching accompanied by music and ecstatic utterances and songs. They are bands of enthusiasts on whom the Spirit of God has laid hold with overpowering force, and, stimulated by loud music and their own ecstasy to still greater frenzy, their enthusiasm becomes highly contagious. It may be so powerful that he who is seized by it is unable to stand. Even Saul is so carried away by it that he strips off his clothes and lies naked for a day and a night in holy frenzy (1 Sam. xix. 24).

Now here we have in this genuine Hebrew religious prophetism all the excitement and ecstatic frenzy which was the accompaniment of the older magical demon-possessed soothsaying. Under prophetic inspiration a man was beside himself, lost all his self-control, "the spirit of the Lord will come mightily upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man" (1 Sam. x. 5, 6, cf. xix. 20). We can readily understand this strange phenomenon. The Hebrews of Samuel's day were a rude primitive people, deeply superstitious and intensely emotional. Now, just as a sudden shock, or fright, or prolonged excitement, or depression naturally produces catalepsy in a person of highly nervous temperament, so an intense wave of excitement working on these superlatively

emotional Hebrew enthusiasts operated in such a manner that they were beside themselves, hardly any longer masters of their own thoughts or wills. These early prophets of Samuel's day did, in their abnormally excited frenzy, see visions, and fall into trances, and dream dreams, and actually hear the voice of God, just as one hears words audibly and sees persons and things in a dream. When the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, the prophet literally saw visions and heard voices, and these terms truly describe the mental experience of these men, and are not mere figures of speech.

But, when we come to the canonical prophets, the whole condition of things has changed. Even Elijah and Elisha, excitable as they are, become only pale reflexions of the frenzy of the earlier prophets of Samuel's day. And when we reach the period of Isaiah, Jeremiah and the canonical prophets generally, the frenzy of ecstatic excitement has practically ceased, so far as it was possible for it to disappear in emotional Hebrew temperaments, and hardly any reference to it is made at all. The new prophet was conscious of being an individual independent person, and as such he entered into fellowship with God. He was no more, to the same extent, overpowered by an uncontrollable impulse from without which superseded his proper self. Excitation there still was, but self-consciousness was not lost; and, in the very few instances where canonical prophets still "see" visions and "hear" words, a clear memory of

what has happened remains, and enables them to describe the whole scene vividly in their own lucid words.

But,—and this is the important point,—language is so conservative, so apt to retain expressions, ideas, habits of thought which have been emptied of all their meaning and are senseless by the light of actual experience, that even when the ecstatic excitation of prophecy had ceased, when prophets no longer normally saw visions, they still continued to use exactly the same form of words as in olden times. The primitive phrases are retained—the prophet “sees,” “hears,” “the hand of the Lord is upon him.” But their original meaning is altogether gone out of these phrases. The words survive, but the feelings they once truly represented are no longer experienced, they are dead.

We are well aware that distinct reference is made to a state of trance or visions in Is. vi. ; Ezek. i. ; Daniel vii., viii., x., xi., xii. ; Zech. i., iv., v., vi. We see precisely the same thing in Acts x. (S. Peter’s vision) ; and 2 Cor. xii. (the vision of S. Paul), but S. Paul distinguishes between “revelations” and “visions” (2 Cor. xii. 1), just as in Numb. xii. 8 “speaking mouth to mouth” is contrasted with “visions and dreams.” True, S. Paul had a “vision,” but no one will dare to assert that he wrote his Epistles under the influence of a vision, and he only refers to it under a kind of semi-compulsion. In the same way there are undoubtedly instances recorded of communications made to the canonical prophets by

God in visions, but this does not alter the case at all. They are the exceptions which prove the rule, and their prophetic writings were no more written under the influence of these very rare and exceptional visions, than were S. Paul's Epistles due to his trance. The visionary condition was an abnormal state with these prophets. It has even been plausibly suggested that "just as an artist, after dwelling long in thought on a work of art which he only has in his mind's eye, suddenly sees it flash before him in unthought-of finish and beauty so clearly that he can retain the vision and carry it into execution, so the truths so long dwelt on by the prophet have so taken possession of the prophet's sub-conscious mind and heart that when God's revelation flashes upon him the vision appears as a visible picture to his eye." We are told that Socrates, diving into the recesses of his soul, was sometimes so abstracted as to be utterly insensible to external impressions, and poured forth enigmatical expressions strange to him in his wakeful state; so rapt in meditation, that he was absent and indifferent to all around him, once for twenty-four hours and remaining the whole time in one spot; and at such times such deep revelations came to him that he was firmly convinced that they were supernatural suggestions from God. Had Socrates been, not a calm thoughtful Greek, but a warm-blooded, emotional, God-intoxicated Hebrew prophet, he would probably have seen visions. In both cases, the experiences were undoubtedly reve-

lations direct from God Himself, but they acted differently on the two different temperaments. That Isaiah, and S. Paul, and S. Peter saw a genuine vision, and this directly illumined by God's light, we do not for one moment doubt. It is inconceivable that they should have invented the incident. Everything shows that each, on this *one* occasion, beheld the supra-earthly pictures he describes, and heard the Divine commission ; but they were very exceptional instances, and the ordinary communications made to them by God were in their conscious moments when they were their own proper selves.

To bring these arguments to a focus. We have seen that in the ancient world there was a firm belief that certain human souls were "god-possessed," so overpowered for the time being by a spirit, that the man was in a state of holy frenzy, beside himself. While he was in this unconscious ecstatic state, the god spoke through him words which the seer could neither control nor often even understand.

These seers or soothsayers ceased to be regarded as holy men after Samuel's day. But the popular superstitious mind clung to them at all times, as Isaiah and Jeremiah show ; and a firm belief in such demon-possession and divination was current in Christ's and S. Paul's day. Even the new schools of prophets of Samuel's day, which superseded these seers, only confirmed the old view of inspiration ; for these early prophets displayed identically the same symptoms of intense emotional and physical frenzy.

They thus fostered the conviction that ecstatic holy frenzy was the natural state not only of demon-possessed soothsayers, but even of the "men of God" who were God's chosen mouthpieces.

This holy frenzy and physical excitement continued, but in an ever lessening degree, in Elijah, Elisha, and even in Amos and Hosea. In Isaiah it has practically ceased; though emotional Oriental natures could never quite throw it off. Normally, however, the canonical prophets, while under the influence of God's Spirit, are their own ordinary conscious proper selves; yet they still use the old set phrases common in the old days of holy frenzy, though the phrases are no longer strictly true as applied to themselves. Thus the casual reader is led, by these set expressions, to believe that the canonical prophets are still mere tools in God's hands.

Therefore the Jews, when the Scriptures began to be collected and the first Canon of Holy Scripture formed in Ezra's day (440 B.C.), (a Canon which was only completed in the first century A.D. long after the voice of prophecy had ceased), naturally fancied that all prophets were merely the unconscious mouthpieces of God and could not choose to alter one syllable in their message. This view coincided with a reverent conception of the Word of God, and the early Christians when they took over the Canon of Holy Scripture bodily from the Jews, borrowed at the same time the Hebrew view of verbal inspiration, and clung to it firmly.

It is only one more illustration of the universal law of evolution. In early days God was conceived as a physically strong almighty God; so His prophets, when under His influence, were seized and carried away by a sudden *physical* impulse. Thus Samson, under God's Spirit, rends a lion, Elijah is by It carried away no one knows whither; they all do things beyond man's normal power. Gradually, as God is seen to be a moral righteous God and not merely physically strong, His methods of dealing with men are also seen to undergo a change in men's minds. He is now represented as using men as free moral agents, working upon them through their own wills. Even though the same words are used of God's action upon man in the two cases, yet "the hand of the Lord comes mightily upon me and overpowers me" means a totally different thing in the case of Elijah on the one hand, and Isaiah on the other. In Elijah's mind it is as if a real physical hand seized him and forced him along; with Isaiah it is a moral impulse within his own heart inspiring him to a certain course of action, just as it is with us now. To quote a precisely parallel case, the writer of Genesis in 1000 B.C. can only conceive of temptation as due to an *outward* voice coming from a *visible* devil in the shape of a serpent. Three hundred years later, Isaiah would have expressed the same fact to his own mind, exactly as we do nowadays; but as a Jew he would still have used something of

the old language, though to him, as to Christ, the words would have now become a mere figure of speech.

So the ecstatic, unconscious, mechanical view of inspiration breaks down utterly. More than this, not only is Inspiration "a divine impulse given to the prophet's own thoughts" (Stanley),—or, still better, a message from God flashed upon the inspired man as a kind of intuition,—but we must ever bear in mind S. Paul's caution, "we have this treasure of God in *earthen vessels*" (2 Cor. iv. 7), for it means much. It tells us something which is only plain common-sense, viz. that whether the "man of God" was Moses, David, Isaiah, S. Matthew or S. Paul, this holy man's character, his personal individuality, his mental views on things in general (outside his message as a *spiritual* revelation from God), were not altered by the fact of his inspiration. Moses and David, for example, had not our modern knowledge of science, therefore we cannot expect in their writings a scientific account of the Creation. The inspired writers each shared the views, the knowledge or ignorance, the broad or narrow moral and religious opinions *of his day and generation*; however perfect the writer may have been, he had a mental atmosphere of his own as we all have. He uttered God's message to mankind, but it comes to us in "an earthen vessel," tinged with his own limited views, coloured by the ideas and language of his day, the light and mental atmosphere of his generation. The

revelation comes to us through a man, not an angel; and it is only in Christ and through Christ that we have the pure perfect message absolutely free from any taint or flaw: in every other inspired man of God the human element peeps through somewhere.

It is precisely this weak human factor which alone explains much that otherwise puzzles us in the Bible. All through the Old Testament, side by side with its great spiritual truths which are its backbone, its real divine message, we find a number of inaccuracies in incidental details. The Flood is described as if it had covered the whole earth, and as if specimens of every animal in existence had entered the Ark in sevens and in pairs: a geological and physical impossibility. In Joshua, the sun stands still upon Gibeon, the moon upon the valley of Ajalon. In like manner, there are many incidents in the Old Testament, mentioned as if done in the name of God, which our conscience condemns. To name only a few: God's order to destroy Israel's enemies wholesale, man, woman, child and beast; the blessing pronounced on Jael above all women for her cold-blooded murder of her guest Sisera in his sleep; the Psalmist's "blessed shall he be that taketh thy children and dasheth them against the stones,"—how are we to reconcile these immoral deeds with our idea of God? We must ascribe them not to God's Inspiration,—they are altogether foreign to His true nature,—we must trace them to their real source, the human element which so

often peeps through the pages of the Old Testament.

This does not lower the Bible in a wise man's eyes. The Inspiration of the Bible no one doubts, the Higher Critics least of all; it is an undeniable glaring fact. There is a wonderful unity underlying all the Bible's variety which clearly proves that, behind the forty odd writers who composed it, there was all the while a Divine Master Mind guiding them one and all. From cover to cover there is a golden connecting thread running through the whole Bible, one goal in view to which everything else points,—Jesus and the Cross. Each portion of the Bible dovetails into the next; its various books seem so many chapters written by one and the same author, at different stages of his life, as his experience and mental horizon broadened, instead of being the work of some forty independent writers living a thousand years apart. How are we to account for this wondrous unity, this perfect adaptation of the various parts so that the independent works of these many authors form not a disconnected library but one Book? There is and can be but one answer: now as in S. Peter's day it is a fact that "The Word of God came not from man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

The Bible still is and ever will be God's guide to man enabling him to live a true life here, to walk with God and clasp the hand of his brother-man on

earth, to look forward to the attainment of the full stature of the perfect man hereafter.

The spiritual portion of the Bible is and ever will be all God's own, full of comfort in our sorrow, our lamp and guide in the way of life, our one staff and support in the hour of death. Modern criticism cannot, does not wish or attempt to alter that,—it is a thing which cannot be shaken; its one aim is to render the Bible more intelligible by opening our eyes to the human element in the minor details of Holy Scripture, a human element which alone accounts for much that is otherwise inexplicable in Bible pages. In the words of one of these Higher Critics, "It is God Who is the Moral Governor of the world, it is He Who has shaped its history, and it is His inspired Bible that enables us to understand it. The Bible remains, and will remain, the most precious heritage of mankind,—God's own Book."

CHAPTER XX.

REVELATION.

IN connection with the Bible the words Inspiration and Revelation are often confused and regarded as interchangeable: they do dovetail one into the other, but they are not the same thing.

Inspiration is the divine flashlight which reveals the picture; it is the cause, and Revelation is the result. In Inspiration God pours a flood of warm clear light upon some great truth, which has been there all the while, only it was hidden from our eyes. The Divine light dissipates the darkness that veiled it from us, and when God thus shows us things *as they are*, and we grasp the reality for the first time, this new picture of an old truth is a revelation to us. The very word Revelation, or "unveiling anew," tells us that the truth now unveiled existed before our eyes saw it. At first it comes upon us as a discovery so strange and startling, but the burst of surprise once over, gradually the new truth takes its place among things which are quite natural: it seems so simple and clear we wonder we did not see it before, and we are then ready for another and further revelation going beyond it.

Thus it is that in the Bible which describes for

us the gradual training, enlightening, education of mankind by God, as their minds and hearts were ready to receive the new truths, revelations naturally came in bits and in various ways: "by divers portions and in divers manners." We have in the Bible pages many of the gradual steps by which God led man from the stage of savagery right up to the perfect revelation in Christ. At first man's eyes were only able to bear a mere tiny gleam of light, and God gave them that, and ever more and more as their eyes were able to receive it. Therefore, when He showed Himself at last to man as He is in Christ, "His own express image," this perfect revelation did not burst suddenly upon men unprepared for it, like a blinding lightning-flash on a dark night; it was rather like the rising of the sun after a long and gradually lightening twilight.

Thus Inspiration is the flashlight: Revelation is the picture unveiled by it: Scripture is the collection of these divine pictures.

A very interesting question suggests itself. Why did God confine His Inspiration and Revelation, in the sense in which we commonly understand these terms, to the Hebrews? We have already hinted at the answer in a former chapter. We have said there that, following a natural law of evolution, just as from the same plants in course of ages, owing to individual peculiarities and different surroundings, are produced flowers differing in size, shape, colour, markings, perfume; and precisely the same thing

occurs in animals, so that some become fishes, birds or quadrupeds, others develop into apes; in like manner each group of mankind, and each family within these groups, has in course of ages developed distinct functions. From some innate peculiarity in the ancestors of the Greeks, and owing to their peculiar surroundings, they have developed an abnormal faculty of refinement and thought; so philosophy and art have been their contribution to the common good of mankind. In the same way, Rome's function and mission has been to teach the human race law, organization and government; while the Teutonic peoples have taught men the lesson of honour and truthfulness. For a similar reason we owe to the Jews our religion.

Firmly believing as we do that the history of the world has a deep meaning, and that it is not a mere chance succession of events: that God is the moral Governor of the universe and has shaped the world's history,—we see in these various functions of the different nations clear evidences of God's Divine plan; and there is no favoritism in it. In God's eyes all individuals and nations are alike, for He is no respecter of persons. They are all members of one body: none can dispense with the other: the health of the whole body depends on the health of each and every part of it. But though the whole body is one, each member has its special function for which it is naturally adapted. Some of these members may seem to be more honorable and to

have higher functions than others, but all are equally necessary to the body's well-being (1 Cor. xii.). Greece's refinement and thought : Rome's law and organization : the Teutonic faculty of truthfulness and honour : Israel's religion : the African's capacity for hard menial work are all wanted. No one nation has a monopoly of all the virtues ; each race must fully develop its own special qualifications, contribute that as its share to the world's civilization, and, in due course, the ripe fruit of each nation's life-work becomes the common property of all mankind. Each nation in turn is God's "steward," entrusted by God with certain talents to be laid out not for its own selfish ends but for the common good of all. Thus it was that after Israel had learnt its lesson of religion, it handed it on to the world at large, and in this sense "salvation is of the Jews."

"Heaven doth with us as we with torches do,
Not light them for themselves."

v

This will also explain why we restrict Inspiration to Jewish writers, and refuse it to the literary geniuses of Greece, Rome or other nations. In its Bible sense, Inspiration means a divine suggestion or revelation to man, coming direct from God, about God Himself in His relationship to man. This is just the distinguishing mark between the Inspiration of a Moses, Isaiah or S. Paul and the inspiration of a Homer or Shakespeare. True, every good and perfect gift comes from above, from the Father of

lights ; every gift of genius, every sacred or secular gift is God's and comes from God. Mankind at large feels that it is so, or they would not have applied one and the same word, inspiration, to Shakespeare and Psalmist alike. In both cases we are all conscious that our souls have been nobly spoken to by a noble spirit : drawn out in admiration and joy, in hope and despair, in aspiration, wonder, love : that the highest and best qualities in us have been forcibly appealed to by a spirit akin to, yet superior to our own. We feel this influence in the presence of a great writer or artist, just as we do in the presence of the writers of Holy Scripture, and we call it inspiration in either case, because we instinctively realise it comes from God. But we do not say of the inspiration of a Shakespeare that it is *Revealed*.

Yes, their *source* is one and the same, but their *aim* is not the same. All great works of genius fill us with awe, but not all lead us Godward : and it is precisely in this pronounced Godward aim that we realise the clear and distinct note of Inspiration in the Bible,—it comes straight from God and leads straight to God. Hence we say the Bible is *Revealed*.

One word more : why does this supernatural Inspiration end with the New Testament writers? The reason is self-evident : it is because with Christ—God made Man—the Revelation is complete. The Gospels are written merely to place clearly before our eyes the portrait of the Christ, a portrait of inexpressible moral beauty and sinless perfection.

P20

We cannot spare the Epistles either, nor the Acts, for, to know Christ fully, we must not only know what He Himself said and did, we must see what He made of the men who surrendered themselves to His influence, how far they caught His Spirit and grasped His teaching. Christ copied, reflected, exhibited in a S. John or S. Paul, and in the early Christian Church, is as much part of the revelation of the Christ as is the perfect Christ Who stands before us in the Gospels. Therefore we cannot spare S. John's philosophy, or S. Paul's theology, or the historical picture of the early Church as drawn in the Acts: they all form part of Christ's own witness to Himself by His Holy Spirit.

With the new Testament, however, the last word has been said: all that is needed henceforth is the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence and guidance to bring home to men's hearts the length and breadth, the depth and height of this perfect Revelation of God in Christ. God's Holy Spirit has been doing this work ever since, and is abundantly doing it now. In many ways, after all these 1900 years, if we may say so without irreverence, we see further and deeper into their own writings than the inspired writers themselves. This is only Christ's fulfilling of His own promise. Christ said He had sown the seed which would grow into a tree: that His disciples would "do greater works than He." He promised that when the Holy Spirit came: "He will guide you into all truth." "for there are many other things

I have to tell you, but ye cannot bear them now." Has the Holy Spirit been guiding men ever since into the truth as they were able to receive it? Can there be any doubt about the answer if we believe in Christ and in the Holy Ghost at all?

God's eternal purpose for man's spiritual progress is ever marching on, never at a standstill; His truths are daily sinking deeper and deeper into men's hearts, finding truer expression in individual lives and the tone of society at large. To urge no other plea, the change of stress from the old Christianity of right belief to the modern Christianity of right character has brought us much nearer to Christ, has made us much more able and willing to learn of Him—and there is more beyond. Let us in our inmost hearts believe in the golden year. It will come.

CHAPTER XXI.

CANON OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

IT is desirable to say a few words about the Canon of Holy Scripture, for the question will naturally arise in many minds, "How is it compatible with the Canon of Holy Scripture to discuss, as has been done in this volume, the authenticity of this or that book of the Bible?" But what is this Canon, and what its intrinsic value? Has it a divine or a purely human sanction to back it? If the Canon is of human origin, on what principle was it formed? What were the considerations which determined the inclusion or exclusion of particular books or groups of books?

The word Canon means originally a "measuring rod, a standard rule": as applied to the Bible it defines "the list or catalogue of books authoritatively received and declared to be Holy Scripture and recognized universally as the Church's rule of faith and practice, its final court of appeal."

We shall see that Ezra, about 440 B.C., was the first to collect the sacred books of the Jews and thus lay the foundation of a Canon; though the word itself does not occur in connection with Holy Scripture till Origen so applied it about 200 A.D. This does

not, of course, mean that the Jews had no sacred books before Ezra's day: for hundreds of years previously, they had fully recognized the Mosaic books of the Law as peculiarly sacred and as having a special Divine authority. A brief historical account of the formation of the Old Testament Canon may make our meaning clearer.

When the Jews returned from the Captivity the last shreds of their old national hopes had practically vanished, politically the Exile had broken and quashed Israel as a nation: to obey the Law of Jehovah and patiently await the coming Deliverer was the only vocation that remained for the little community gathered in Jerusalem. The voice of prophecy, long since lacking the old fire, expired with Malachi, and the age of religious literary activity was past. Thus, amid present misfortune (which the distant hope of a brighter future could not dispel), and weighted with regretful memories of a past tinged with ideal splendour, the whole concern of the nation from this time forward was simply to preserve the sacred inheritance of that past, and to lean more and more upon the sacred books which had been their sheet-anchor in the Exile, especially the Mosaic Law. In the eyes of Ezra and his contemporaries the Law was God's greatest gift to Israel, the complete revelation of Jehovah's Will, and the basis of His solemn inviolable Covenant with His chosen people. In His Law God had made known the perfect way of life, binding

Himself by its terms to reward both now and for ever the pious Jew who faithfully kept its precepts. All these circumstances, the political annihilation of the nation, the dearth of prophecy, the present misery, and this deification of the Law called into existence a new class of men, the scribes, who took the place of the old prophets. They were pure men of letters who entirely devoted themselves to the study of the law and copied, edited, interpreted it for the common good. Thus Ezra, the great type and model pattern of this new order, is described in Ezra vii. as "a ready scribe in the Law of Moses who had set his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel its statutes and judgments." The Law was made the one rule of faith and practice.

Neh. viii. tells us that at a solemn public meeting, when "all the people gathered themselves together as one man," Ezra the scribe brought "the book of the Law of Moses," read it publicly to the people day by day right through, and the whole assembly bound and solemnly pledged themselves to keep this Law. Thus public sanction was given to the Pentateuch, some say the Hexateuch, and there and then was laid the foundation of the Canon and the first step taken in its formation (444 B.C.).

But the canonization of Scripture could not stop there. There were other great religious writings in existence: there were the great prophets whose exhortations and warnings, which at the time of their utterance had fallen on listless ears, had been verified

by experience. A number of historical books such as Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings were also held in the highest reverence. These prophetic and historical books were soon felt to be only second in importance to the law, and a second Canon was soon formed under the general title of *The Prophets*. Under this term are included the *Former Prophets*, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, and the *Latter Prophets*, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve minor prophets. This division receives its general name of *The Prophets* because the prophets were regarded as the authors of all these books. Chronicles was not at first included in this group because it is a very late book. On the authority of the book of the Maccabees (2 Macc. ii.), the formation of this Canon is generally ascribed to Nehemiah, but this is an open question. This second collection or Canon was highly esteemed, though it did not take equal rank with the first.

As to the Hagiographa it is extremely difficult to say when its books were canonized. The Psalms, on their own intrinsic merits, and from their sacred use in Temple worship, were always recognized as inspired; the Proverbs of Solomon early acquired canonical authority from their religious tone, edifying wisdom, and the authority of the name of their supposed author. Ruth and Lamentations were long regarded as forming a kind of appendix to Judges and Jeremiah respectively, and as unquestionably canonical: of Job's right to inclusion in the Canon there never was

a shadow of a doubt in the Jewish mind, and Daniel was also admitted. Over Ecclesiastes, however, because of its cynicism, Canticles owing to its sensual tone, and Esther for its want of spirituality, there were grave questionings of heart ; and the discussion waxed long and furious as to their inclusion in the Canon down to 90 A.D. and even after.

The Jews took such a material view of the holiness of Holy Scripture that they jealously regarded the alteration of the smallest letter or particle in it, "one jot or one tittle," as a grievous sin. This is curiously seen in their expression for a canonical book as one which "*defiles the hand* ;" the idea being that a really canonical book is such a holy thing that merely to touch it is desecration, and requires an expiation for sin precisely as if a man had touched the sacred Ark. To avoid this defilement the sacred books read in the synagogue were covered, but for a long time it was stoutly maintained that Canticles, Ecclesiastes and Esther did not "defile the hand." It was only in 90 A.D., at the Council of Jamnia, that it was finally decided by a majority, but by no means unanimously, that these books do "defile the hand." Even then, for long after, there was a difference of opinion on the subject and some Rabbis excluded one or more of these books, while others included in the Canon the apocryphal books of Sirach and Baruch.

If it be asked on what definite principle books were admitted into the Canon, it is not easy to

answer. Real or apparent importance—especially religious—determined their adoption. The Pentateuch was admitted because of its Divine Covenant and Mosaic authority; it is the Hebrew Magna Charta, the basis of Israel's religious and national life, and has always been regarded by the Jews as peculiarly Divine. The Prophets spoke as God's mouthpieces, and their historical books bore witness to God's hand in Israel's history. Liturgical use in Temple and synagogue worship was another factor which contributed to the inclusion of a book in the Canon (e.g., Psalms, Lamentations), as also did authorship by some famous person, such as Solomon.

Of the three portions the Law undoubtedly stood first in Hebrew estimation; *The Prophets* occupied a somewhat lower place, but its books were regularly read in the public services side by side with the Law. The Hagiographa was regarded as distinctly inferior to the other two. The only portions of this third section publicly read are Canticles (at the Passover), Ruth (at the Feast of Weeks), Lamentations (at the anniversary of the Destruction of Jerusalem^a), Ecclesiastes (at the Feast of Tabernacles), Esther (at the Feast of Purim). But the Hagiographa never

^a Septuagint preface (not found in the Hebrew; but cf. 2 Chron. xxxv. 25). Lamentations is now read on the 9th of Ab, the anniversary of the burning of the Temple by the Chaldeans. Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther together form the five Megillôth ('rolls'), or small books written on separate rolls for liturgical use at the five Jewish festivals mentioned.

ranked on a par with the other two sections in Hebrew opinion, or anywhere near it, and was scarcely distinguishable, as we have seen, from those of the more spiritual books of the Apocrypha. This undefined boundary of the Canon will explain the many allusions to the Apocrypha in the New Testament, implying that the writers had no rigid notions about the hard and fast line dividing canonical from uncanonical books.

Thus the authority of the writers of the New Testament which would have gone far towards settling the question of the Canon, does not materially help us, for many of them seem to include Apocryphal books in their Bible. Jude quotes Enoch, Hebrews, and Maccabees; S. Paul and S. Peter are familiar with the Book of Wisdom; S. James with Sirach; while the very books about which both Jews and Christians have any serious doubts, Esther, Canticles and Ecclesiastes are not even referred to in any way. Indeed so little idea had the early Christian Church of what books were in the Canon or not that Melito, Bishop of Sardis (170 A.D.), made it his special business to travel to Palestine to enquire among the native Jews there the number and names of their canonical books.

To this historical sketch we should add a word on the Septuagint, or Greek translation of the Bible, made about 200 B.C. This most important version of the Old Testament seems almost to have superseded the original among Greek readers, since the

New Testament writers almost invariably quote from it; and we would especially point out that it inserts a number of Apocryphal books in addition to the writings generally included in the Canon; further that the early Christian Fathers, Irenæus, Clement, and Origen, followed its lead.

Even the Reformers of the sixteenth century did not regard the authority of the Canon as binding, and felt justified in discussing it, though they did not alter it. Luther thinks 1 Maccabees not unworthy to be placed on a level with the other canonical books, and would like to exclude Esther from the Canon. The modern study of the subject similarly tends to obscure the line drawn between the Hagiographa and the Apocrypha. Indeed, relying on their internal value, or the witness of the books themselves to their spiritual worth, there are many who feel that if Ecclesiastes, Esther and Canticles had never been included in the Canon, and Sirach and Wisdom had been admitted, it would have been as well.

We have entered into this important question thus in detail to show that the formation of the Canon of Scripture has been a very slow and gradual process, and that it is based on human, not divine, judgment and sanction. The canonicity of the respective books was not established by any Council or definite official ecclesiastical authority at the time of the formation of the Canon: the present list of books found its way into the Canon simply because the hearts of men told them that these writings were

inspired. It was enlightened religious common-sense that formed the Canon, and it is enlightened religious common-sense which must judge its value and finality ; the spiritually-guided intelligence and verdict not of this or that individual or body of individuals, but of all spiritually-minded, right-thinking, honest and devout men throughout the world. The acclamation of souls, the ripe judgment and verdict of enlightened religious public opinion, must be the final court of appeal. It will never make much alteration in the present accepted list of holy books, for the only books of whose claim to canonicity there is any serious doubt are just those which, from a religious point of view, are least important. But the essential fact to remember is that the Canon was formed gradually, as the result of *local* usage : it was not the outcome of criticism or of any authoritative decision on the part of the whole Church or General Councils, but the product of universal Jewish reverence and esteem. The acclamation of souls established the canonical value of the books before any Church or General Council gave its official sanction to them. The Canon was not formed in one place or at one time : it varied in different places and at different times, and the value assigned to some books of the Hagiographa and Apocrypha respectively was not according to our estimate, but according to the estimate of men of bygone times. From 400 B.C. to 400 A.D. its boundaries were undefined, elastic, constantly changing. At the pre-

sent day the Roman and Greek Churches have a much more extended Canon than our own, while Luther, and the Reformers, and modern Bible students alike have felt that the last word has not yet been said on the subject.

The primitive Church may be quoted as a witness for the Canon ; that is all. Really and truly the canonicity of these books lies within themselves and nowhere else. The one question is, "Do they bear God's own stamp and mint-mark? Do they, or do they not, bear clear witness to their own inspiration as containing a revelation and declaration of the Divine Will?" In the words of the Westminster Confession "our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority of Holy Scripture is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness in our own hearts." This was the test originally applied to these books in the first instance when they were admitted into the Canon ; and the application of this same test may at some future time lead to some slight alteration in our present list of books. But we may be sure that it will not be done lightly or unadvisedly, for, in Westcott's phrase, the general consensus which fixed the Canon was almost "a divine instinct, a providential inspiration."

All we imply is that the Canon was formed not by God, but man ; therefore, when the question arises, "Should Leviticus or Numbers be included in the Mosaic Books? Are Esther, Canticles and Ecclesiastes worthy of a place in the Canon?" it is no

real answer to exclaim, "They are in the Canon, and therefore God's own Word." So long as inspiration cannot be claimed for the process by which the Canon was formed, the mere fact that a book is included in the Canon does not prove that the book is inspired; neither does it prove that every really canonical book within it occupies its proper chronological place, or is ascribed to its right author.

We fully believe with Westcott that the Canon was formed with a kind of "divine instinct," that "history teaches by the plainest examples that no one part of the Bible can be set aside without great and permanent injury to the Church which refuses a portion of the apostolic heritage." But this can be pushed too far: his estimate of the loss to the Church from the exclusion of the epistles of S. James or the Hebrews, and the canonising of the whole Apocrypha, is undoubtedly correct and just; but would the exclusion of Esther, Ecclesiastes and Canticles be a loss or a gain? The Canon of Holy Scripture is an inestimable boon and an imperative necessity. It is, on the whole, so well formed as to be almost the outcome of a "providential inspiration." But when we speak of the Canon, or apply the term to the Bible, its value depends upon our taking the word in its true sense and not forcing into it a supernatural guarantee of inspiration which the human origin of the Canon does not justify.

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